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A B O O K

ABOUT

W O R D S .

BY

*or Frederick*  
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*39*  
*10975 a*

LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1869.

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## PREFACE.

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THE INCREASED ATTENTION lately paid to our Language as a subject of Education, has induced the Author to state in the following pages his views on English (and other) Words. These views are the result of a long professional career in tuition, together with the study which such a calling naturally involves.

Notwithstanding the rapid strides made of late years in the science of Words, much still remains unknown to the general reader; but if the following remarks be accepted as a small contribution to a more extended knowledge of this interesting subject, the Author will be amply compensated for any trouble it may have cost him to collect them.

KENSINGTON:

*May, 1869.*



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## INTRODUCTION.



WHAT is meant by a Language? It is a collection of all the words, phrases, grammatical forms, idioms, &c., which are used by one people. It is the outward expression of the tendencies, turn of mind, and habits of thought of some one nation, and the best criterion of their intellect and feelings. If this explanation be admitted, it will naturally follow that the connection between a people and their language is so close, that the one may be judged of by the other; and that the language is a lasting monument of the nature and character of the people.

Every language, then, has its genius; forms of words, idioms, and turns of expression peculiar to itself; by which, independently of other differences, one nation may be distinguished from

another. This condition may be produced by various causes; such as soil, climate, conquest, immigration, &c. Out of the old Roman, or Latin, there arose several modern languages of Europe; all known by the generic name—Romance; viz. Italian, French, Provençal, Spanish, and Portuguese. These may be called daughters of ancient Latin; and the natives of all these countries down to the seventh century, both spoke and wrote that language. But when the Scandinavian and Germanic tribes invaded the West of Europe, the Latin was broken up, and was succeeded by Italian, French, Spanish, &c. The Latin now became gradually more and more corrupt, and was, at length, in each of these countries, wholly remodelled.

History has been called ‘the study of the law of change;’ i. e. the process by which human affairs are transferred from one condition to another. The history of a language has naturally a close analogy with political history; the chief difference being that the materials of the latter are facts, events, and institutions; whilst the former treats of words, forms, and constructions. Now, in the same way as a nation never stands



still, but is continually undergoing a silent—perhaps imperceptible—transformation, so it is with its language. This is proved both by experience and reason. We need hardly say that the English of the present time differ widely from the English of the fourteenth century; and we may be quite sure that the language of this country, two or three centuries hence, will be very different from what it is at present. It would be impossible for a nation either to improve or decay, and for its language at the same time to remain stationary. The one being a reflex of the other, they must stand or fall together.

What, then, is this law of change? On what principles is it based? How are we to study or follow out its operations? These questions are exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to answer definitively. But there are circumstances connected with the formation of certain languages which may throw some light on them. It may be received as a principle that, when one nation is overrun or conquered by another, the effect on the language of the conquered depends mainly on the condition of that which is brought in by the conquerors. If the victors be as superior to the

vanquished in civilisation and improvement as they have proved themselves in physical power, they will impose their language on the conquered people. If, on the other hand, that of the vanquished be the more cultivated, the reverse will take place; the dialect of the conquerors will be absorbed into that of the conquered.

When the Visigoths settled in Spain in the fifth century, their dialect made but little impression on the language afterwards known as Spanish. The Latin element in the Peninsula, though at that time falling into decay, was far more refined and polished than the barbarous dialect then introduced; and it consequently remained, with some slight modifications, the language of the country. The same happened when the Northmen settled in France in the tenth century. It is astonishing how rapidly the language of Rollo and his followers was absorbed into French! This may have been assisted by the intermarriage of the conquerors with the women of the country; but it was produced chiefly by the different conditions of the two languages.

On the other hand, when the Normans, under

William the Conqueror, invaded England in the eleventh century, a different effect was produced. The Norman French after a time, though not immediately, enriched the English language with many words, but it did not, in the slightest degree, either then or afterwards, affect its grammatical forms or idioms. The cause of this was that the Saxon language was, at that epoch, already fixed, and fit for literary purposes. It was, indeed, much further advanced as a literary language than the invading Norman-French. It therefore resisted this external pressure; and though it afterwards admitted numerous French terms, the English language remains to this day Saxon, and not French, in its tone, character, and grammar.

The climate of a country, or the temperament of a people, may also strongly influence the character of the language. Given an indolent and luxurious race, and we must expect that softness and effeminacy will appear in their spoken and written expression. No acute observer can fail to perceive a close connection between the national character of the Italians and the softness and beauty of their harmonious

tongue. Again: the simplicity and somewhat homely and rough vigour of the Teutonic race, are clearly shadowed forth in the sounds and forms of the German language.

The climate, too, in both cases, may have contributed towards these results. A hot, enervating atmosphere produces languor of mind as well as body; whilst a bracing cold air, though it may assist in producing a phlegmatic temperament, at the same time infuses vigour, energy, and power into those who are subjected to its influence.

There are also, no doubt, many hidden causes of gradual changes in language. These are difficult to ascertain; and some of them escape the sagacity of even the most acute observers. Political struggles, foreign wars, domestic habits, literary studies, &c., may all contribute to alter the character of a people, and so far to affect their language.

But whatever may be these mysterious laws of change, they must be left to Nature herself, and no one must attempt to interfere with them. There are no more miserable failures recorded in history than the attempt by rulers to interfere with the laws of Nature. We are told (though

not on very good authority) that William the Conqueror *ordered the Saxons to speak Norman-French*. He might as well have ordered his new subjects to walk on their heads—the one was quite as easy as the other. But no writer tells us with what success this decree was executed. Ordericus Vitalis, indeed, states that William endeavoured to learn Saxon, though he does not say how far he succeeded. Now it is not very likely that he should have studied a language which he was, at the same time, bent on exterminating. Indeed, there is an air of extreme improbability about the whole story.

In more recent times, it is well known that Joseph II., of Germany, issued an edict that all his subjects, Slavonic, Magyar, or German, should adopt one uniform language—German. But it was soon found impossible to execute this decree, for the people would as soon have parted with their lives as with their language; the whole empire was, therefore, immediately thrown into confusion. Many of the provinces broke out into open rebellion, and it at length became necessary to abandon the project.

It is then clear that no one has the power, of

his own will or caprice, to add a single word to a language, or to cast one out of it. These changes must be left to Nature, and all we can do is to watch her operations, to observe and record facts. But we may speculate on the origin of words, and may sometimes discover the causes of their birth. We may also inquire into the circumstances of their career, and the laws which regulate their forms, changes, meanings, &c. These inquiries are particularly comprehensive and interesting, because they naturally lead us to some knowledge of what words represent, and also because they are closely connected with the study of the human mind both as regards intellect and passion.

# A BOOK ABOUT WORDS.



## CHAPTER I.

### ORIGIN OF WORDS—FAMILIES OF WORDS.

MOST PHILOLOGISTS have hitherto held the opinion that, in general, no satisfactory account can be given of the origin of language. They can trace a word from one language to another, and can account for its various forms and changes by laws now generally understood; but they confess their inability to explain what determined the original form of its root. They take that original form for granted, as a sort of intuitive truth which must be admitted as a necessity. They can explain the circumstances of its career; but of its first cause or nature they profess to understand little or nothing.

But though this is the general opinion, all linguists admit that in every language certain words,



more especially those that convey ideas of sound, are formed on the principle of *onomatopœia*; i.e. an attempt to make the pronunciation conform to the sound. Such English words as 'hiss,' 'roar,' 'bang,' 'buzz,' 'crash,' &c., are of this class. One can hardly pronounce these words without, in some sense, performing the acts which they represent.

One school of linguists have lately expressed a belief that all words were formed on this principle. A very curious illustration of this view is given in Mr. Wedgwood's 'Origin of Language.' Explaining the interjection *Hem*, he says, it was originally an attempt to stop some one. We are supposed to be walking behind some person; we wish to stop him, and we exclaim, '*Hem!*' This is given as the primary meaning of the word. 'The sound is here an echo to the sense.' But *hem* is used in other ways; either as a noun, or a verb; always, however, retaining its original idea of restricting, or keeping back. The *hem* of a garment is what *prevents* the thread from raveling. Again, soldiers are sometimes *hemmed* in by the enemy; that is, *prevented* from using their free will to go where they choose. This illustration is intended to prove that the principle of *onomatopœia* applies not only to words that represent sound, but, by analogy, to other meanings



derived from that principle. There *is* sound implied in the interjection *hem*; though in the noun and the verb, both derived from that interjection, no idea of sound is conveyed.

This connection between sound and sense is certainly a natural principle; and however scornfully it may have been ridiculed by some philosophers, it has undoubtedly produced many very fine passages in the poetry of both ancient and modern times.

1. The chorus of frogs in Aristophanes, where their croaking is represented by words invented for the occasion:

Βρεκεκεξ, κοαξ, κοαξ.

This is, to say the least of it, very ingenious, and, in its way, beautiful, because true.

2. The same principle seems to apply in the πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης (poluphloisboio thalassês) of Homer, where the first word was probably intended to represent the roaring of the wave mounting on the sea-shore; and the second, the hissing sound which accompanies a receding billow.

3. Another example of onomatopœia, in Virgil's *Æneid*, viii. 452, has been often quoted:

‘Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum;’

where the succession of dactyls is admirably

adapted to represent the sound of the hoofs of a galloping horse.

4. Several examples of the same figure may be found in Milton. Describing the thronging of the fallen angels in Pandemonium :

Thick swarmed, both on the ground and in the air,  
Brushed with the hiss of rustling wings.

5. Also, speaking of the gates of hell :

. . . . open fly  
Th' infernal doors ; and on their hinges grates  
Harsh thunder . . .

Here the recurrence of the letter *r* is well calculated to convey the idea of a harsh, creaking, grating sound.

6. A similar effect is produced in Tasso's 'Gerusalemme Liberata.'

*Il rauco son della Tartarea tromba.*

This connection between sound and sense may very probably exist in many words where we now fail to perceive it ; but in the present state of our knowledge of the subject, we can hardly pronounce positively in favour of this view as applied to the whole body of a language. The question remains, for the present, in abeyance.

### *Families of Words (Saxon).*

But setting aside the origin of words, it is not difficult to show the affinity which many springing

from the same root have for each other. There are in English, as in other languages, hundreds of words which may be said to have a family connection, and which are traceable to one common origin, or root. This connection may be found in the Saxon as well as the Romance part of our language. *Th* (soft) may be considered as the type of the idea of demonstration. All the English pronouns and adverbs beginning with these letters have that general meaning, which may be seen in '*that*,' '*the*,' '*there*,' '*thence*,' '*this*,' '*thither*,' '*those*,' '*thus*,' and others. Again, the initial *wh* may be considered as the type of an interrogative, or relative meaning. This also may be seen in many English pronouns and adverbs; as in '*what*,' '*when*,' '*whence*,' '*where*,' '*whither*,' '*who*,' '*whom*,' '*whose*,' &c. The principle of inversion has affected the whole of this class of words. They are all of Saxon origin, and were spelled in that language *hw*, and not *wh*; as in '*hwæt*' (what), '*hwaer*' (where), '*hwanne*' (when), &c.

### *Tw.*

The Saxon initial *tw* corresponds with the Romance *du*. There are many English words having this initial, which convey the idea of 'two.' 1. The numeral itself, '*two*.' 2. '*Twain*,' a now

obsolete form of 'two.' 3. 'Twin,' one of *two* children born at a birth. 4. 'Between,' which is only another form of 'by twain.' 5. 'Twilight,' i.e. between *two* lights—daylight and lamplight. 6. 'Twice' is equivalent to '*two*' times. 7. To 'twist' is to bend *two* or more threads together. 8. To 'twine' is to interlace, so as to form one body out of *two*. And 9. A 'twig' is so called from its being easily twisted.

It is said that the word 'nose' originally signified a promontory—something prominent—and that it is so called from being the prominent feature of the face. This view is supported by its analogy with *naze*, a headland, and the Scotch *ness* (as in *Inverness*), a part of the coast which juts forward. It may be observed that the word meaning 'nose' has in most European languages the form N-S-. This may be seen in the Greek *νήσος*, an island or promontory; the Latin *nasus*, the Italian *naso*, the German *Nase*, the French *nez*, and the English *nose*. Whether this be or be not an onomatopœia one thing is certain, viz. that in English the initial sn (ns inverted) in so many cases expresses nasal action, that it may be taken as a general type of that meaning. This may be found in a multitude of words having that initial, all expressing various actions of the nose. It may be seen in 'snarl,' 'sneer,' 'sneeze,' 'sniff,' 'snore,' 'snort,' 'snooze,' 'snout,' 'snub,' 'snuff,' &c.

*Ber-an—to bear.*

This is the source of our English verb ‘to bear.’ It produces the following:—1. ‘Barrow,’ an implement used for carrying or *bearing*. 2. ‘Berth,’ a place in which one is *borne*. 3. ‘Bier,’ a coffin in which a corpse is *borne* to the grave. 4. ‘Birth,’ the *bearing* of a child. 5. ‘Berry,’ the fruit which a tree *bears*.

*Bles-an—to blow.*

From this verb we have, 1. ‘Blaze,’ a strong flame *blown* forth. 2. ‘Blast,’ a violent *blowing*, or gust of wind. 3. ‘Blain,’ a boil, or *blowing* up of the flesh. 4. ‘Blight,’ injury done to corn, &c., from being *blasted*. 5. ‘Blister,’ a *blowing*, or rising, up of the skin. 6. ‘Blossom’ (or ‘bloom’), the *blowing* forth of the flower. 7. ‘Blush,’ a *blowing* forth of the blood. 8. ‘Bluster,’ as the wind when *blowing* hard.

*Brecc-an—to break.*

1. The English verb ‘to break’ is directly from the above. 2. ‘Bridge,’ a building which *breaks* a passage across a river, &c. 3. ‘Breach,’ that part of a wall or fortification *broken* into by artillery. 4. To ‘broach’ a cask of ale is to *break* into it. 5. A ‘brook’ is a stream of water which *breaks* its way across the country.

*Bug-an—to bend.*

1. A 'bay' is a *bending* in of the line of coast. 2. In sailors' language, a 'bight' is the hollow part of a bay, or a coil of rope *bent* round. 3. A 'bow' is so called from its being *bent*. 4. To make a 'bow' is to *bend* the body. 5. 'Beam' (compare the German 'Baum') is so named from its property of *bending*. 6. A 'bough' is the part of the tree that easily *bends*. 7. A 'bower' is made of branches bowed or *bent* down. 8. The adjective 'buxom' (compare the German 'biegsam') is properly *bending* or pliable. 9. 'Elbow' is the bow of the ell, or that part where the arm *bends*. 'Big' and 'bag' are probably from the same source; they both convey the idea of something *bent* round.

*Ceap-ān—to exchange.*

The essence of buying and selling lies in the exchange of goods for money, or money for goods. Hence come 1. the English word 'chapman' (sometimes contracted into *chap*), which properly means a buyer and seller. 2. To 'chaffer' is to bargain about a purchase. 3. 'Cheap,' bearing a low price, refers to a similar transaction. 4. We have also 'Cheapside' and 'Eastcheap,' originally markets, or places for buying and selling. 5. Chepstow, Chipping Norton, and other names

of market-towns in England, are from the same root. 6. The wind is said to *chop* when it changes from one point of the compass to another.

*Ceaw-an—to chew.*

1. The older form of 'chew' was 'chaw,' which we still occasionally hear in 'chaw-bacon.' 2. The cud is the grass *chewed* by ruminating animals. 3. A quid of tobacco is a piece kept in the mouth to be *chewed*.

*Dael-an—to divide.*

1. To 'deal' is from the above verb. It is used in English in a variety of senses, all containing the idea of dividing into parts. 2. A certain sort of wood is called 'deal' from being easily *divided*, or cut into planks. 3. To 'deal' cards is to *divide* them into packets or parcels. 4. Tradesmen 'deal' in certain articles when they sell them in small, *divided* quantities. 5. We also say 'a great deal,' speaking of a large part *divided* from the mass. ['*Some-deal*' was formerly said, but it is now obsolete.] 6. A 'dole' is a small part or share *dealt* out. (Compare the German 'theilen.')

*Dic-ian—to dig.*

From this Saxon verb we have, 1. To 'dig.' 2.



'Dike,' a mound of earth '*dug*' out. 3. 'Ditch,' a line '*dug*.' 4. 'Dagger,' an instrument used for '*digging*;' and 5. 'Dock,' a place '*dug*' out on the side of a harbour or bank of a river, where ships are repaired.

*Drag-an—to draw.*

This Saxon verb gives the English 'to draw.' From this we have, 1. 'Dray,' a heavy cart *drawn* along. 2. A 'drain,' a tube to *draw* off water. 3. A 'draft,' an order to *draw* out money from a bank. 4. A 'draught' is a quantity of liquid *drawn* into the mouth. 5. To 'drawl' is to drag on the voice heavily. 6. 'Drudge,' and 7. 'Dredge' (for oysters, &c.); both which express a dragging or *drawing*. (Compare the German 'tragen' and the Latin 'trahere'.)

*Dropi-an—to drop.*

From this root comes 1. The verb 'to drop.' 2. To 'droop,' i.e. to lean downwards. 3. To 'drip,' or fall continually. 4. To 'dribble,' or to fall in small '*drops*.' 5. A 'dribblet,' or a very small *drop*.

*Eri-an—to till.*

1. To 'ear,' in the sense of 'to plough,' is now obsolete in English, though we have an 'ear,' or



spike, of corn—the result of *tilling*; and 3. ‘Earth,’ that which is *tilled* or cultivated.

*Far-an—to journey.*

1. From this verb (German ‘fahren’) comes our verb to ‘fare;’ literally, to go on, or make a journey. 2. The adverbs ‘fore,’ ‘forth,’ and ‘far’ convey a similar idea; viz. that of onward movement. 3. The ‘ford’ of a river is that point at which it can be ‘fared,’ or crossed; and 4. To ‘ferry’ is the act of faring, or passing across a river or lake. 5. ‘Frith’ and ‘firth’ are formed on the same principle; they are those parts of the sea where one can be ferried across. 6. The first syllable (*fur*) in the word ‘furlough’ belongs to this family. It is leave (lough) granted to a soldier to ‘fare,’ or journey, home for a time. All these forms are devices to explain a variety of modes of *faring*, or moving onwards.

*Fed-an—to feed.*

This gives us, 1. To ‘feed.’ 2. ‘Fat,’ the result of being well ‘fed.’ 3. ‘Fodder,’ provision for cattle; and, 4. ‘Food,’ that which ‘*feeds*,’ or supplies nourishment.

*Fi-an—to hate.*

From this verb we have in English—1. A ‘fiend,’ one who *hates*. 2. Hence also comes ‘foe,’ an

enemy, or one *hated*. 3. To the same root may be traced 'fie!' an interjection expressing dislike or *hatred*; 4. and also 'foh!' or 'faugh!' an exclamation of disgust.

*Fleaw-an—to flow.*

Hence come, 1. 'To flow.' 2. 'Fleet;' a number of ships that '*flow*,' or swim, on the water. 3. The adjective 'fleet,' qualifying what *flows* by. 4. To 'float,' or swim, on the water; and, 5. 'Flood,' a large *flow* of water,

*Fuli-an—to make dirty.*

From this root come, 1. 'Foul' (putrid, offensive). 2. To 'defile;' to make 'foul.' 3. The noun 'filth,' dirt. 4. The adjective 'filthy;' and 5. 'Fulsome;' full of filth, nauseous, disgusting.

*G-an—to go.*

1. 'Gan' is the Saxon verb whence the English 'to go' is derived. 2. This gives us 'gait,' i.e. a manner of '*going*;' and, 3. 'Gate,' a door through which one '*goes*.' To these may be added 4. 'Gang,' a number of people '*going*' together; and, 5, the nautical term 'gang-way,' i.e. a passage 'to go' through. 6. The verb 'to gad,' i.e. to be continually '*going*' from one place to another, also probably belongs to this family.

*Glowi-an—to burn.*

The verb ‘to low,’ in the sense of ‘to burn,’ does not now exist in the language; but the above verb gives us, 1. To ‘glow,’ i.e. to burn intensely; whence come the forms, 2. ‘Gleam;’ 3. ‘Glimmer;’ and, 4. ‘Glimpse;’ 5. ‘Gloom,’ or a state into which light ‘gleams;’ and, 6. the word ‘light,’ which is a participial form of the old verb to ‘low.’ In one English word the root ‘low’ is still retained, viz. ‘whitlow,’ a painful *white burning* on the finger or thumb.

*Graf-an—to dig.*

From this verb we have in English, 1. ‘Grave,’ a pit *dug*. 2. To ‘engrave,’ i.e. to scratch or *dig* in. 3. Groove, a line *dug* in. 4. ‘Gravel,’ earth *dug* up. 5. To ‘grovel,’ literally, to *dig* up earth; and, 6. To ‘grub,’ or scratch into the earth.

*Gyrd-an—to enclose.*

The English words derived from ‘gyrdan,’ and having a cognate meaning are, 1. To ‘gird,’ to *enclose* by tying round. 2. Girdle, a small band or cincture. 3. ‘Girth,’ the band which ‘girds’ the saddle on a horse. 4. ‘Garter,’ a band tied round the leg; and, 5. ‘Garden,’ a space *enclosed* for the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, &c.

*Lang—long.*

From the Anglo-Saxon and German 'lang' is derived, 1. our adjective 'long;' from which again comes, 2. the abstract noun 'length.' 3. The adjective, 'lean;' and 4. 'lanky' are also members of this family. 5. To 'linger,' i.e. to remain a *long* time in a place. 6. To 'lunge;' to make a *long* stroke with a rapier; and, 7. A '*link*,' that which makes a chain '*longer*.'

*Lecj-an—to lay.*

1. Both the English verbs 'lay' and 'lie' (which is to lay oneself down) come from this verb, 2. 'Ledge,' a place on which to *lay* anything; 3. 'Ledger,' a book which *lies* on a merchant's desk; and, 4. 'Law,' a rule *laid* down.

*Læd-an—to lead.*

1. Besides the verb 'to lead,' we have from this source: 2. 'Ladder,' an instrument which *leads* to a higher place. 3. Load-star, and loadstone, i.e. a *leading* star or stone.

*(H)lifi-an—to lift.*

This is the source of, 1. our verb to 'lift.' Also, 2. 'Loft,' i.e. a room 'lifted' high. 3. The adverb 'aloft'—'lifted up.' 4. 'Aloof;' and 5. The adjective 'lofty.'

*Maw-an—to cut down.*

From the Saxon root 'maw' comes immediately 1. Our verb to 'mow,'—as well as a 'mow' (a barley-mow or a hay-mow); i.e. a quantity of barley or hay mown and heaped together. From this is derived, 2. 'Mead,' i.e. a *mowed* field; and, 3. Meadow, a large mead. 4. Farmers still use the word *aftermath*, which, with them, is a second mowing. 5. The now obsolete 'mo' or 'moe,' as used in the sense of a collected quantity or heap by Chaucer and other writers down to Lord Surrey, is said to give us the words 'more' and 'most' as the comparative and superlative forms of 'mo;' but this is doubted by many etymologists.

*Pocca—a bag.*

There are several English derivatives from this root. 1. We find it in the word 'smallpox' (or pocks), where it means little bags or holes left in the skin by the action of this disease. 2. We once had the word 'poke' in the sense of 'a bag,' as in the phrase 'to buy a pig in a *poke*.' 3. 'Pocket' is a diminutive of poke, i.e. a little bag. 4. To 'poach;' and 5. 'Pouch' are variations of the same root; for to 'poach' is to steal game and conceal it in a 'pouch.' 5. A 'peck,' and 6. a 'pack' are both generic terms of a similar mean-

ing; and, 7. 'Puckered' cheeks are bagged or puffed out with the cold.

*Scuf-ian—to push.*

This root is a fertile source of English words; we find it, 1. in our now not very elegant word 'shove,' that is, to push rudely or roughly. 2. A 'sheaf' of corn takes its name from the stalks of which it is composed being 'shoved,' or *pushed* up together; and, 3. the 'shaft' of a javelin is the wooden part which is '*shoved*' into the iron. 4. A 'shovel' is a small instrument used to '*shove*,' or push into, coals, etc.; and, 5. our 'shoes' are so called because we '*shove*' our feet into them. 6. 'Scuffle' and 'shuffle' are only modified forms of the verb 'to shove,' and express a repetition of that act. According to some etymologists the word 'sheep' belongs to this family, as being an animal '*shoved*' or pushed along in flocks from place to place. Hence, perhaps, the name; but this must be considered a doubtful derivation.

*Scyr-an—to cut.*

From this Saxon verb come, 1. To 'shear' and the noun 'shears.' 2. A 'share' of anything means, properly, a part '*cut*' off, or divided from the whole substance; and a 'ploughshare' is that

part of the implement which ‘cuts’ through the earth. 3. Common experience tells us that the adjective ‘sharp’ qualifies what easily *cuts* or divides. 4. A ‘shire’ signifies a district *cut* off or divided from the rest of the country ; and ‘sheriff’ is a contraction of ‘shire-reeve,’ i.e. the officer of the ‘shire.’ 5. ‘Shirt’ and, 6. ‘Short’ both belong to the same class ; the first is a garment ‘*cut*’ off, and the second is a participle from the verb ‘to shore’ or *divide*, the noun ‘shore’ meaning the line which ‘*divides*’ the sea from the land. From the same root comes, 7. ‘Sheer.’ Sheer impudence and sheer nonsense mean impudence and nonsense unqualified, i.e. ‘divided’ or *cut* off from any modesty and sense. Besides the above, we have the same general idea in the expression, 8. ‘Shreds’ and patches, little snippings or ‘*cuttings*.’ 9. Shakspeare’s ‘shard-borne’ beetle means the beetle borne on his ‘shards,’ or scaly wings *divided* in the middle. 10. To these we may add ‘potsherd,’ a piece broken off or *divided* from a pot. The words ‘scar,’ ‘score,’ ‘scream,’ ‘screech,’ ‘shrill,’ ‘shriek,’ &c., belong to the same class, the leading idea in them all being that of *cutting* or dividing ; and they are all based upon the type ‘scr’ or ‘shr.’



*Sitt-an—to sit.*

1. This is the origin of our word to 'sit;' whence comes, 2. To 'set.' The latter is the transitive from the intransitive, formed by a change of the vowel. 3. 'Settle' is a frequentative of '*sit*,' and expresses a permanent sitting. 4. A 'seat' is from the same root; it is that on which any one '*sits*;' and, 5. A 'saddle' is a seat on horseback.

*Sleaw—slow.*

1. From the Anglo-Saxon 'Sleaw' comes our adjective 'slow.' Hence we have, 2. 'Sloth,' or the quality of being *slow*; 3. 'Sloven' (m.) and 'slut' (f.), which both convey the idea of being *slow* and negligent; 4. 'Slug,' a *slow* animal, from which comes the verb 'to slug,' to indulge in sloth; and, 7. 'Sluggard,' a lazy indolent man.

*Stig-an—to mount.*

This root gives us, 1. 'Stair,' a step to *mount* by; 2. 'Stile' (A.-S. Stigel), a gate to be *mounted* or got over; 3. 'Stirrup' (or stig-rope), a rope by which to *mount*; and, 4. 'Stye,' i.e. a *rising* pustule on the eyelid.

*Straeg-an—to spread.*

From the A.-S. root 'straeg' we have the English words 'straw' and 'strew.' 1. 'Straw'



is the dry stalks of certain plants 'strewn' or scattered about. 2. To 'stray' means to go dispersedly or separately. 3. 'Straggle' is a frequentative of the last word. 4. The word 'street' is by some supposed to be connected with this root. A 'street' is a way 'strewn' or paved with stones.

*Taepp-an—to draw drink.*

Hence we have in English, 1. 'To tap,' and, 2. A 'tap,' the instrument by which wine or beer is drawn from the cask; 3. 'Tapster,' one who draws liquor. 4. To 'tope' is to 'tip' off beer or spirits. 5. A 'toper' is one who topes, and to 'tipple' is to be continually toping. 6. One who 'tipples' is likely to be often 'tipsy.'

*Tell-an—to count.*

The ordinary meaning of our English verb 'to tell' is to recount the particulars of some event or occurrence. Hence comes a 'tale,' which signifies the recounting of such particulars. The passage in Milton's 'L'Allegro'—

Every shepherd *tells his tale*  
Under the hawthorn in the dale—

has been explained as 'every shepherd *counts over his sheep.*' Shakspeare has, 'as thick as *tale* came

post with post,' that is, as rapidly as could be counted. From the same root comes 'till,' a box into which money is *counted*. Again, when we speak of 'tolling' a bell, a similar meaning is implied, viz. the numbering or *counting* out the strokes; and a 'toll' is money *told* or *counted* into the hands of the receiver. Again, accounts are said to '*tally*' when, after being reckoned or *counted* up, they amount to the same sum.

*Teog-an—to pull.*

From this verb come, 1. To 'tow,' to *pull* a boat or vessel along; 2. To 'tug,' to *pull* with force. 3. The noun 'tow' means flax which must be 'tugged,' or *pulled*, asunder. 4. The adjective 'tough,' which qualifies what must be *pulled* hard. 5. 'Team,' a number of horses *pulling* together; and, 6. 'Tight,' what is 'towed' or *pulled* together with force. 7. The sailor's phrase 'to haul taut,' is 'to *pull* tight.'

*Wan-ian—to decrease.*

1. We still say, 'the moon waxes and "waned,"' i.e. apparently increases and *decreases* in size. 2. 'Wan,' an adjective which expresses thinness or *decrease* of health. 3. 'Want' signifies a condition in which our means are *decreased*; and, 4. To 'wean' is to gradually accustom any one to a 'want.'

*Weg-an—to move.*

1. From this come the English 'way,' which means the space through which one can '*move*.'
2. To 'wag' (the tongue or the head), i.e. to '*move*' it rapidly.
3. A waggon (sometimes contracted into 'wain') is a vehicle which '*moves*' goods, &c., from one place to another.
4. To 'sway' is the intensive of wag—it is to *move* strongly; and,
5. 'Swagger' is the frequentative of 'sway.'

*Weri-an—to wear.*

1. This is the origin of our word 'to wear,' in its ordinary sense.
2. From this we have 'weary,' the state of being '*worn*' with fatigue.
3. From the same root come 'worse' and 'worst,' which are really the comparative and superlative degrees of '*wear*,' i.e. 'more worn' and 'most worn.'
4. To 'worry,' i.e. to '*wear* out' by importunity.

*Wit-an—to know.*

- From the root 'wit' in this Saxon verb came, in English, 1. The old forms 'wist' and 'wot,' together with, 2. The modern word 'wit,' and the expression, 'to wit'—all these imply *knowledge*.
3. We have 'wise' (which at first signified *knowing* much), with its derivative, 'wisdom.'
  5. 'Wizard' and 'witch' are both from the same

source, and were terms originally applied to those who were supposed to come by their '*knowledge*' by a compact with the powers of darkness. 6. The word '*wittingly*,' i.e. of one's own *knowledge*; and, 7. A '*witness*,' or one who tells us what he '*knows*' about some fact.

*Wrid-an—to twist.*

This is the source of many English words: 1. To '*writhe*,' or *twist* the body in pain. 2. '*Wrath*.' When in '*wrath*,' one is '*writhed*' or tortured by angry passion. 3. '*Wry*' and '*awry*,' i.e. '*twisted*' on one side. 4. To '*wring*' the hands is to '*twist*' them convulsively. 5. '*Wrong*' properly means '*wrung*,' or *twisted* out of the right path. 6. '*Wrangle*' denotes a continual distortion or perversity; and, 7. To '*wriggle*' is the frequentative of '*to wring*;' it means to *twist* about repeatedly. Beside these, we have, 8. The wrist, i.e. the joint which '*twists*' or turns easily; and, 9. To '*wrest*' and '*wrestle*.' 10. To '*wrench*.' These are all modes of *twisting*. 11. To '*wreathe*' is to *twist* or twine together, and, 13. A '*wrinkle*' denotes a distortion of a smooth surface.

## CHAPTER II.

## LATIN AND FRENCH WORDS.

*Latin Roots.*

ENGLISH words which indicate mental actions, feelings, or general abstractions, come to us from a Latin or a French source. These, though not the most numerous, comprise a very considerable portion of the English language. It must be understood that French is, in the main, composed of Latin words ; and we may conveniently divide this portion of the English language into three classes:—  
1. Words derived directly from Latin ; 2. Words derived indirectly from Latin, through a French medium ; and, 3. Middle-age Latin words, i.e. those formed from a corrupt Latin by the monks of the middle ages. These last appear in French in a modified form, and come into English still further altered in their spelling and pronunciation.

I. In most cases English words of the first class are compounds or derivatives. We have not adopted the roots themselves, but use them only

in composition, with some particle or preposition. For example: the Latin root 'clude' is never found in English as an independent word, though we have 'exclude,' 'include,' 'preclude,' &c. It is also to be observed that a Latin verbal root, in many cases, produces two forms in English; one containing the root of the verb itself, and the other its participial form. Thus, the above example will give us 'exclude,' from the Latin verb 'excludere,' and also 'exclusion,' 'exclusive,' from its participle 'exclusus.' If we take any one of these roots, say 'clud' and 'clus' (shut), we may find it in modern English in a great variety of forms. From the participial root (clus) come 'clause' (a part of a sentence *shut* in); 'cloister' (a place *shut* in); 'close' (to *shut* to); 'closet' (a small place *shut* up); 'recluse,' one '*shut*' out from the world, &c., as well as the verbs exclude, include, preclude, with their derivatives exclusion, inclusion, preclusion; the adjectives 'exclusive,' 'inclusive,' 'preclusive,' and the adverbs 'exclusively,' 'inclusively,' &c. These words are not often found in the vocabulary of the uneducated classes; they belong rather to the language of books, or to the set forms of eloquence, than to that of daily intercourse. We should say, in common parlance, that a boy was *shut out* of the room by his companions; but we should hardly say that he was *excluded*. In a secondary sense,

however, such a word would be more properly adopted. We should say correctly, 'that such considerations were *excluded* from this view of the subject,' where we could not very well use 'shut out.' Again, we could not properly say that any one was 'included' in a dungeon; meaning that he was 'shut in.' Words drawn from these Latin roots have a very wide application in English, but they are confined chiefly to a mental, and are seldom used in a physical, sense. Saxon forms the basis of our language, and is used in practical and domestic matters; while our spiritual conceptions are expressed by French or Latin words.

Another well-known Latin root is 'cīde' (from *cædere*, to slay); which corresponds in meaning with the more familiar Saxon word 'kill.' We have, not 'cide,' but 'fratricide,' 'matricide,' 'regicide,' 'suicide,' 'parricide,' 'homicide,' and 'infanticide.' To these may be added, 'concise,' 'precise,' 'decision,' 'incision,' &c. All the latter are derived from the participle of the same Latin verb—'cæsus.'

Again: the root 'sume' (sumpt), from the Latin 'sumĕre,' to take, gives us 'assume,' 'consume,' 'presume,' with their participial derivatives, 'assumption,' 'consumption,' 'presumption,' 'sumptuous,' 'presumptuous,' &c.

The Latin root 'cede' (cess) appears in English



in two forms of spelling ; one, 'cede,' as 'accede,' 'concede,' 'recede' ; and the other, 'ceed,' as in 'exceed,' 'proceed,' 'succeed.' These also have their participial derivatives, as found in 'excess,' 'success,' 'process,' 'accession,' 'succession,' 'procession.' It will be seen that in all these cases the rule holds good. *Cry* is a more household, domestic word, but 'acclaim,' 'declaim,' 'proclaim' are used on more important occasions.

The principle of derivation by the change of an internal vowel-sound prevailed in ancient Latin as well as in Saxon. Thus, from the Latin verb 'facere' (to make or do) was formed 'efficere' (to effect or bring about), the *a* in the root being changed into an *i* in the derivative ; and we have English words from both these sources :—fact, faculty, facility, &c., from 'facere' ; and defect, effect, deficient, efficient, &c., from the other form.

Some of these Latin roots are extremely prolific. For example, the Latin verb 'tenere,' to hold, produces a very large number of English words. In certain verbs it appears in the form 'tain,' as in to abstain, appertain, attain, contain, detain, maintain, obtain, pertain, retain, and sustain. To these may be added the derivatives, continent, pertinent, and impertinent ; besides which, we have from the same source, 'tenant,' 'tenable,' 'tenure,' 'maintenance,' and 'sustenance,' &c.



Again: the root 'duce' (from 'ducere,' to lead) gives rise to many English derivatives. First we have (through French) the word '*Duke*,' which originally meant the leader of an army. Then come the verbs to adduce, conduce, deduce, induce, produce, reduce, seduce, traduce, in all which the idea of leading is involved. To the same origin may be traced *ductile*, *aqueduct*, *viaduct*, *conduct*, and *product*, besides *deduction*, *reduction*, *abduction*, *production*, &c.—nineteen or twenty words from one root!

II. A rule has been laid down to enable us to determine whether an English word is derived directly from Latin, or filtered from Latin through French:—  
 'If the word comes directly from Latin, the only change it will undergo will be in the ending. Thus "actio" in Latin will be "action" in English; "innocentia" will make "innocence;" "tormentum," "torment," &c. But if the word comes through French, it will be more altered in its passage; it will be disturbed, not only in its ending, but also internally. Thus "populus" in Latin is "people" in French, and "people" in English. The Latin "thesaurus" gives the French "trésor," and the English "treasure." This may be accepted as a general rule, but it is often impossible to determine by the outward form of a word whether we derive it directly from its primitive Latin source,

or take it at second hand from the French. In most cases of doubt the probability is in favour of the French, for there are still many English words which were at first spelled, and probably pronounced, as in French, and whose orthography, and perhaps pronunciation, was afterwards reformed and brought back nearer to the Latin type. 'Doubt' and 'debt' are still pronounced with the *b* silent; but when first brought into English they were both written and pronounced as in French—'doute' and 'dette.' Afterwards, when it became known that they were originally derived from the Latin verbs 'dubitare' and 'debere,' the *b* was restored in the spelling, though the French pronunciation was retained; and the same took place with many other Romance words.

There are certain classes of English words from whose outward form we may conclude that they are of Latin (or French) origin. First, when an English noun ends in '*tion*' preceded by a vowel, we may be pretty sure that it is either directly from Latin, or from Latin through French. Such words as 'formation,' 'completion,' 'transition,' 'commotion,' and 'ablution,' are derived either directly or indirectly from Latin. We never meet with this ending in words of purely Saxon origin. The termination of these was in Latin '*tio*;' in French they appear in '*tion*;' and in English the

same ending (*tion*) is adopted. This Latin ending, 'tio,' is, however, sometimes found in French in the form *son*, which has thus been introduced into certain English words of this class. The Latin 'ratio' gave the French 'raison' and the English 'reason.' Again, 'traditio' in Latin became 'trahison' in French and 'treason' in English. But in many cases the French ending has not passed into English; for the words 'declinaison,' 'conjugaison,' 'oraison,' &c., appear in English as 'declension,' 'conjugation,' and *oration*, i.e. in their Latin rather than their French forms.

Another large class of originally Latin words appear in English with the ending 'ty.' These are all abstract nouns, which in Latin end in '*tas*.' This final *tas* is expressed in French by *té*, and in English by *ty*. Thus the Latin '*societas*' becomes in French '*société*' and in English '*society*.' In the same way, from the Latin '*bonitas*' come the French '*bonté*' and the English '*bounty*,' &c.

In many of these cases we find two forms of the same word, each with its own meaning. One of these tends to the French, and the other to the Latin, in spelling; and it may be observed that the French has been more disturbed by contraction, abbreviation, or inversion than the Latin. For example, the two words 'secure' and 'sure' are both originally from the Latin '*securus*;' but the

former is directly from Latin, whereas the latter is from the French contracted form—‘*sûr*.’

Another pair of these double forms may be found in ‘hospital’ and ‘hôtel.’ The Latin ‘*hospes*’ signified either a ‘host’ or a guest, i.e. the entertainer or the entertained. From ‘*hospitalis*’ came the contracted French form ‘*hôtel*,’ in the sense of a house where guests or travellers are entertained, as distinguished from ‘*hôpital*,’ where invalids are taken care of. From the French both these words came into English, each retaining its original meaning.

This principle of a divided meaning is also seen in ‘persecute’ and ‘pursue,’ the latter of which was known in English before we became acquainted with the former. ‘Pursue’ is from the French ‘*poursuivre*,’ and is used in the general sense of following after eagerly. ‘Persecute,’ from the Latin ‘*persecutus*,’ the participle of ‘*persĕqui*,’ is distinguished from ‘pursue’ by the meaning of ‘to follow after with an intent to injure.’

Two other words of this class are ‘superficies’ and ‘surface.’ The former is pure Latin; and is compounded of ‘*super*,’ ‘upon,’ and ‘*facies*,’ a face. But this word is only used in a scientific or mathematical sense; whereas ‘surface’ has a more general signification, and means whatever we can see of the outside of any material substance.

We find a similar difference of meaning, as well

as form, between 'potion' and 'poison.' Both these came originally from the Latin 'potare,' to drink.' The former is the direct Latin, the latter the French form, and both are now English. But the second denotes a species of the first; for 'poison,' as is well known, is that species of 'potion' which destroys life.

This power of dividing a word into two meanings is not peculiar to English; for many instances of it may be found in German, French, and Italian. But it is of great advantage. It has the effect of providing a large number of terms to express shades of thought by slight differences of meaning, and it thus materially assists in making language a more perfect exponent of human thought.

The following list exhibits some of these double forms :—

outer . . . utter	nib . . . . neb
morrow . . morn	person . . . parson
lance . . . launch	beacon . . . beckon
wine . . . . vine	to . . . . . too
wind . . . . vent (peg)	tone . . . . . tune
wise . . . . . guise	discreet . . . discrete
why . . . . . how	sauce . . . . . souse
wagon . . . wain	scatter . . . shatter
deploy . . . display	stick . . . . . stitch
cattle . . . . chattels	cap . . . . . cape
cross . . . . . cruise	quell . . . . . kill
milk . . . . . milch	glass . . . . . glaze
make . . . . . match	grass . . . . . graze
metal . . . . . mettle	&c. . . . . &c.

III. The third division of this class consists of Low Latin, or, as they are sometimes called, 'monkish Latin' words. These have their origin in classical Latin; but they are all corruptions of that language, and were formed at a time when it had fallen into decay. To this division belong such English words as 'chance,' 'esquire,' 'ewer,' 'forest,' 'justle,' 'manage,' 'noise,' 'noon,' 'pilgrimage,' 'rear,' &c. In all these we may recognise a Latin origin, though the words themselves were unknown to the ancient Romans.

From the Greek verb *βάλλειν*, 'to cast,' probably came the Italian 'ballo,' the French 'bal,' and the English 'ball.' Playing at ball was, in the middle ages, often associated with *singing* and dancing. Hence the Romance word 'ballare,' and the Old Spanish 'ballar,' which both meant 'to sing.' The French 'ballade' and the English 'ballad' may be thus accounted for. Apropos of 'ball,' it may be here noted that the word 'bull,' as in the 'Pope's bull,' is derived from 'bulla,' the Latin for 'ball.' It was the custom in the middle ages, after writing any document or letter, to affix to it a seal in the form of a 'ball,' so that the Pope's 'bull' really means the Pope's 'ball.'

Our word 'chance' was in old French 'chéance,' from 'cheoir.' These are all from the Latin verb 'cadere,' to fall (out) or happen. The French



adjective '*méchant*' is derived from the old participle '*més-chéant*,' from '*més-choir*,' to fall out badly or unluckily. We have not adopted this adjective, but our noun '*mischance*' may be traced to this source.

A curious case of a modern term derived from compound Latin roots may be found in our word '*squire*.' This is made up of the Latin '*scutum*,' a shield, and '*fero*,' I bear. Hence '*scutifer*,' a middle-age word, meant a shield-bearer, i.e. one who attended on the knight, and carried his shield. In old French, '*scutifer*' was softened into '*escuyer*,' or '*écuyer*;' and it afterwards appeared in English as '*esquire*,' or '*squire*.'

The old French for '*water*' was '*aigue*,' from the Latin '*aqua*.' From this was formed the word '*aiguière*,' a water-vessel; and this is the origin of our English word '*ewer*,' as in '*cream-ewer*.'

Of the same class is the word '*forest*.' This did not exist in ancient Latin, but sprang up in later ages. The monks made the word '*foresta*' out of the Latin '*foras*,' abroad, or out of doors; the same root which produced the English words '*foreign*,' and '*foreigner*,' one who comes from abroad. The monkish Latin form was '*foresta*,' the French '*forêt*,' and the English '*forest*.'

Under this head may be also placed '*comfort*'

and 'courage.' The former of these is well known to be peculiarly English, and there is no word in any of the continental languages which exactly translates it. True, the French are beginning to use the word 'comfortable;' but it may be fairly doubted whether it realises with them the same idea as with us. It has evidently a Latin element; and the second syllable is, no doubt, derived from the Latin 'fortis,' strong. So that, what 'comforts' would, in the first instance, probably mean, what strengthens, and would especially apply to 'creature-comforts'—food or drink, which strengthens the body. Afterwards it would be used in a secondary and more extended sense.

The Italian word 'coraggio' is derived from 'core,' as the French 'courage' comes from 'cœur;' both these being originally from the Latin 'cor,' the heart. From French the word 'courage' has passed into English, where the spelling is the same, though it is somewhat differently pronounced. But neither 'comfort' nor 'courage' is found in classical Latin.

The word 'contrada' in Italian and Provençal came into French in the form 'contrée,' and into English as 'country.' It is derived from the Latin preposition 'contra,' against; and means, properly, the part of the land which lies over-*against* us. But the word is altogether of modern



manufacture. (Compare the German ‘Gegenstand,’ where the meaning is precisely the same.)

The Latin preposition ‘juxta’ has given rise to several words, both French and English, which did not exist in ancient Latin. The French ‘joust,’ a combat in which the antagonists rushed at, or pushed *close to*, one another, is one of these. Also ‘ajouter,’ to add or put one thing *close to* another. From these we have, in English, the adverb ‘just,’ as in the phrase ‘just now,’ i.e. *close to* the present time; and also the verb ‘to adjust,’ i.e. to place things *close to* each other. ‘To justle,’ or ‘jostle,’ is a frequentative verb, formed from the above adverb ‘just.’

The word ‘danger’ is composed of two Latin roots: ‘damn-um,’ loss, and ‘ger-o,’ I bear; these produced the Low Latin word ‘domigerium.’ This was afterwards corrupted and softened into the French ‘danger,’ and in that form passed into English.

Our word ‘manage’ is from the Latin ‘manus,’ a hand, through the French ‘main.’ There was a Low Latin word, ‘managerium,’ which meant occupation or actual possession, in the sense of holding in the hand. Thence the word was transferred to the furniture requisite for the occupation of a house, and, in the shape of the French ‘ménage,’ to the household of the occupier. The

identity of this word with the English 'manage' may be seen in the expression 'bon mesnagier,' one who understands how to conduct a household—a good manager.

From the Latin 'manēre,' to remain, or dwell, are derived the French 'maison' and the corresponding English 'mansion;' and from the same source come the English words 'manse,' the clergyman's dwelling-house, and 'manor,' the lord's dwelling-house.

From 'minutus,' the Latin participle of the verb 'minuo,' come the English adjective 'minute' and the noun 'minute.' Properly 'minuto primo' was, in Italian, the first division of the hour; 'minuto secondo' was the *second*, and 'minuto terzo' the *third* division; which is, in French, 'tierce,' i.e. the sixtieth part of a second. The English word 'mite' is only a contraction of minute—it is a minute insect; and a 'minuet' is a dance with *short* steps.

'Noisome' and 'annoy' are derived from the Latin 'nocēre,' to hurt or injure; whence it may be conjectured also comes 'noise,' as being something that annoys, as a stir, wrangle, or brawl.

The word 'peel' means the rind of fruit or the bark of a stick. This is from the Latin 'pellis,' skin, from which comes the French 'peau.' The radical sense of this word is, that which is stripped

off, or *pilled*. 'Pillage' is a derivative of 'pill,' or 'peel.' It means a collection of things stripped off, or plundered.

The English word 'palm' (of the hand) is from the Greek *παλάμη*, through the Latin 'palma.' A certain tree is called a palm because of its broad spreading leaves, which resemble the palm of the hand; and a palmer was formerly a pilgrim carrying a palm-branch in his hand, in sign of his expedition to the Holy Land.

## CHAPTER III.

## OLD AND NEW WORDS.

ONE very interesting point in the study of language is the cause of the introduction of new, and the falling off of old, words. It is to be observed that a new word is generally ushered in with a sort of parade—a flourish of trumpets; many writers make a rush at it, and drag it in, whether applicable or not. Its novelty is attractive; and it is often used in a sense which really does not belong to it. But it is not every word thus introduced that maintains its place: it is often found, after all, that it has more sound than sense, and is rather ornamental than useful; and then it is sure to fall into neglect, dies away, and is heard of no more. On the other hand, in the natural course of things, many words which have done good service, and for a long period, are at length discontinued, and give way to new, and sometimes more useful, terms. These slip out of

the language unperceived; they are no longer wanted—no one enquires for them; some new and more expressive terms push them out, and they are consigned to oblivion.

It is quite ludicrous to observe how strangely uneducated or illiterate people use words which, to them, are quite new. They are so fascinated with their novelty, or, perhaps, with their sound and length, that they apply them in all manner of odd and eccentric meanings. Two of these words—‘promiscuous’ and ‘immaterial’—seem to be great favourites with a certain class: an ignorant Englishman somehow imagines that the word ‘immaterial’ conveys a sort of reproach, and he insults his fellow-workman by calling him an ‘*immaterial*,’ meaning that he is a fellow of no worth or respectability. The word ‘promiscuous’ is often used by the lower orders in the same loose way. A witness in a trial, not long ago, stated that ‘he met the prisoner “promiscuously” (or, as he pronounced it, ‘permiskously’) in the streets;’ meaning, by chance, or casually.

If we trace the history of the English language through the various phases of its career, from its earliest up to its present condition, we shall find that it has been continually growing more Romance and less Saxon. It is said that a process of decay had set in even before the introduction

of Anglo-Saxon into England—that the language had already lost some of its inflections; and it is well known that, in process of time, these endings, with some few exceptions, wholly disappeared. Again, at a later period, many Saxon nouns which had formed their plurals in *en* rejected this form, and adopted the Romance (or French) plural-ending, *s*. At one time, the word ‘eye’ formed its plural ‘eyne,’ or ‘eyen;’ ‘tree’ made ‘treen;’ ‘shoe,’ ‘shoon;’ and even the Romance word ‘uncle,’ ‘unclen.’ These forms have now all departed, and in their place we have ‘eyes,’ ‘trees,’ ‘shoes,’ &c.

The mode of forming a plural by a change of the internal vowel, which was common in Saxon nouns, has now almost vanished from the language. We have some few left; but not more than five or six examples, as ‘tooth,’ ‘goose,’ ‘foot,’ ‘man,’ ‘woman,’ and ‘mouse.’ We may be quite confident that any new nouns brought into English will form their plurals by the French, and not the German, system.

Again, verbs of strong conjugation are much fewer than formerly. Many verbs now form the past tense by adding *d* or *ed* to the present which, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, changed the internal vowel-sound for that purpose. To ‘climb’ formerly made ‘clomb’ (a form used by Milton

in the seventeenth century); 'quake' made 'quake;' 'laugh,' 'lofe;' 'reach,' 'raught;' and many others. All these now adopt the weak form of conjugation, and form the past tense by adding *d* or *ed* to the root of the verb: 'climb-*ed*,' 'laugh-*ed*,' 'reach-*ed*,' 'quak-*ed*,' &c. And so it will be with all verbs that may be hereafter brought into the language; they will, one and all, form the past tense by adding *ed*.

But not only have we lost these Saxon characteristics: whole lists of Saxon words have disappeared which once did good service in the language. This may be easily shown by glancing over a few pages of Chaucer or Mandeville, where we shall find a multitude of terms which have been long disused. For example:—

clepen . . . to call	sterve . . to die
thorpe . . . village	swappen . to strike
grutchen . . to murmur	foryield . to repay
stound . . . moment	reden . . to advise, &c.

Even in Shakspeare and Milton we may find many words which are now obsolete. All these, again, are Saxon; so that it may be truly said that our losses have been Saxon, whilst our additions have been all Romance, i.e. Latin or French.

In most cases substitutions have been made; but we shall always find that the disused word



was Saxon, while the one substituted for it is French or Latin. Thus, for the Saxon compound 'monath-seoc' (month sick) we now have 'lunatic;' instead of 'waeter-adl' (water-illness), we have 'dropsy.' The old Anglo-Saxon 'eorth-gemet' (earth-measure) has given way to the Greek 'geometry;' and the Saxon 'witenagemot' (meeting of wise men), has been transformed into the French 'parliament.'

In all probability it was the influence of the Norman conquest that assisted this tendency to substitute single terms for compound words. The French language not being favourable to such formations, after a time pushed out many Saxon compounds; and yet, in point of clearness, power, and feeling, the Saxon words were far more effective. Their separate parts were significant, and familiar to the commonest understanding; whereas the new word was, of course, at first altogether foreign, and even after a time was far from being so impressive as the other. For example, the meaning of the Anglo-Saxon noun '*sige-beacan*' must have been clear to the most uneducated mind: 'sige' is 'victory,' and 'beacan' is 'sign;' that is, 'victory-sign.' Now, for this was substituted 'trophy,' which, being a more uncommon word, does not explain itself as the other, and is, therefore, not so vivid or pic-



turesque. Again, '*heah-setl*' is translated into 'throne.' In the former word we have two distinct ideas, 'high' and 'seat,' both familiar to the most illiterate peasant; whereas the word 'throne,' though now common enough, must at first have puzzled the people considerably.

One very expressive Saxon word, '*wanhope*,' has disappeared from the language. This may be considered a real loss; '*wanhope*' expressed that condition of the mind in which we have not actually lost all hope, but when it is beginning to *wane*, i.e. grow gradually less, and we feel it slipping away from us. 'Hope' and 'despair' are the two opposite ends of the scale, and '*wanhope*' formerly expressed an intermediate state of mind. This was a beautiful word, and we have now no equivalent for it.

A host of Saxon derivatives have also vanished from the language which were once in common use; and among them may be named those having the prefix '*for*.' We still retain the words 'forbear,' 'forbid,' 'forget,' 'forgive,' 'forlorn,' and 'for-swear;' but in the writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we often meet with 'forfend,' 'fordrive,' 'forsay,' 'forspend,' 'forwither,' 'for-waste,' &c., all of which are now dead and buried. One word of this class survives, though in a different form, viz. the Saxon verb '*fordon*.' This

verb, though given up, may be still seen in the familiar expression '*to do for.*'

This tendency towards raising the French at the expense of the Saxon portion of English may be accounted for by various circumstances of our history. First, there can be no doubt that the Norman conquest was mainly instrumental in producing this effect. This event could not have failed to be unfavourable to the prosperity of the Saxon. The relation in which the conquerors stood to the conquered was of itself sufficient to account for it, and though the enmity between the two races will explain how the two languages were kept so long separated, when the fusion did at length take place, the advantage was clearly in favour of the governing classes.

Another cause of this leaning to the French may have been the number of French words introduced by Chaucer. The English language (if, indeed, it then deserved that name) was in the latter part of the reign of Edward III. only just beginning to be formed. The Saxon element, which ever since the Conquest had been crushed, was now lifting its head, whilst the French was somewhat discouraged. But the language was not then fit for literary, especially for poetical, purposes; and, therefore, at the very time when it first appeared as English, a large influx of French words took place.

But this result was assisted by other circumstances. The number of Huguenot refugees who found shelter in England after the massacre of St. Bartholomew added materially to the French population of this country, and assisted in swelling the French vocabulary of the English language.

In the seventeenth century the marriage of Charles I. and Henrietta Maria of France could not fail to produce some effect on the language and literature of the age, and though this French taste received a check during the rule of Cromwell, it returned with double force at the Restoration. The foreign tastes acquired by Charles II. in his wanderings on the continent mainly contributed to this state of things, and on the return of the Stewarts, the general tone of the court and nobility, as well as the literature of the age, was French.

But this was as nothing when compared with the consequences of Louis XIV.'s revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685. We are told by Mr. Smiles that, in consequence of this cruel and impolitic act, as many as 400,000 French emigrants found an asylum in this country. It is impossible that this could have been without effect on the English language, and although statistics on the subject are wanting, we may confidently conclude

that this immigration considerably increased the French element of the English language.

There can be little doubt that the style of Latinity which Johnson adopted also led to the abandonment of many words of Saxon origin. He was the most weighty authority in England in all things regarding language, style, and literature, till the year of his death, 1784; and his numerous imitators, maintaining his peculiarities of style, still further contributed to the same state of things. Add to all these influences the general leaning of most writers of the present day, and we shall not be surprised at the condition of the English language.

When we consider the numerous and continual attacks which the Saxon element of English has thus sustained, we may be inclined to wonder that there should be any of it left—that it should not have been utterly crushed and annihilated by these raids. But this wonder will be increased when we find that it not only exists, but constitutes to this day by far the larger portion of our language. This is surely sufficient to prove the innate depth, force, and vigour of that element; and we may fairly conclude that if it has so far been able to make head against these innovations, it retains an intrinsic power to resist future attacks of the same nature.

In truth, Saxon is not so much an element as the very basis and foundation of English. The great body of articles, pronouns, numerals, conjunctions, prepositions, signs, auxiliaries, &c.—in fine, all the framework and joints of the language—are drawn from that source.

There are, however, some French philologists who would have it that the majority of words in English is much in favour of French. M. Thommerel gives himself great pains to prove this conclusion, but apparently on very insufficient grounds; and M. Génin, who has written some valuable works on his own language, says, in his ‘Variations du langage Français,’ that the English are indebted to the French for more than three quarters of their language! ‘Les Anglais,’ he writes, ‘ne sont riches que de nos dépouilles; si l’on se mettait à cribler leur langue, et à reprendre ce qui nous appartient, il ne leur resterait pas même de quoi se dire: “Bonjour! comment vous portez-vous?” Leur fameuse formule, *How do you do?* est volée à la France.’ The tone of this remark is pretty evident, and he surely here allows his patriotism to get the better of his good sense; for he certainly ought to have known that, though our language is enriched with many French words, the main body of English, since the fourteenth century, has been, and is at the present moment,

drawn from a Saxon and not a French source. In the case of 'How do you do?' however, he is probably right. He quotes from several ballads of the twelfth century the expression 'Comment le faites-vous?' as then used in the English sense of 'How do you do?' to prove that we have adopted—or rather, as he says, stolen—this form from the French. It has been suggested that the verb *do*, in this phrase, is derived from the Saxon 'dugan,' to prosper or prevail, from which comes the more modern 'doughty;' as in '*a doughty knight*.' According to this explanation, 'How do you do?' is equivalent to 'How do you get on, or prosper?' But Mr. Wedgwood, in his 'Dictionary of English Etymology,' rejects this view. He agrees here with M. Génin, that it is a close translation of the old French 'Comment le faites-vous?' And so the matter now stands.

Various circumstances give rise to new words, which either remain in or depart from the language as they may be found serviceable or otherwise. One modern importation is '*Handbook*.' This appears an unnecessary innovation, more especially as we had already a word which answered the same purpose, and quite as well, viz. '*Manual*,' and which has the additional recommendation of being a simple, not a compound, word. 'Handbook' is of German origin, and



probably owes its introduction to that German influence which came in with the late Prince Consort. Mr. Murray has largely contributed to its popularity by his numerous and well-known 'handbooks,' and the word will now most probably retain its place in the language.

D'Israeli the elder claims the honour of having introduced the word '*Fatherland*' into English. This is certainly a useful addition to our vocabulary. We had before no word to distinguish between the two Latin meanings of '*rus*' and '*patria*;' 'country' being equivocal in sense, since it may mean either the land of our birth, or that part of it distinguished from the town. Here the French have hitherto had the advantage of us: they have '*patrie*,' for '*Fatherland*;' '*pays*,' for a territorial division; and '*campagne*,' in a rural sense.

The exact date of the introduction of the term '*stand-point*' is not known, but it is among the new words of about thirty or forty years' standing; and we may conclude from its form that it is German. This word is, no doubt, an improvement on 'point of view,' as being a closer, and therefore more convenient, expression. It is now in common use, especially with writers on mental philosophy.

The noun '*antecedent*' has been hitherto used exclusively as a term of grammar, but of late years

it has appeared in a new sense. It is now often used, in the plural number, to signify the actions and general conduct of some one whose reputation we wish to ascertain. We must inquire, they say, into his 'antecedents;' that is, try to find out what he has been doing, who were his companions, how he has hitherto conducted himself, &c. This is certainly a convenient term enough. It expresses concisely what would otherwise require a rather ponderous circumlocution. Mr. 'Punch,' with his usual satirical spirit, said that it would be more satisfactory to know something of a suspected man's *relatives* than of his *antecedents*!

We learn from Lord Macaulay that the word 'gutted' was first used on the night in which James II. fled from London: 'The king's printing-house . . . . was, to use a coarse metaphor, *which then for the first time, came into fashion, completely gutted.*'

The first writer who used the word 'anecdote' was Procopius, the Greek historian of the reign of Justinian. He wrote a work which he called 'Anecdotes,' or a 'Secret History.' The Emperor Justinian and his wife, Theodora, are here represented as two demons, who had assumed a human form for the destruction of mankind. Procopius tells us that he wrote this work as a supplement to his 'History,' in which he could not, for fear of torture



and death, speak of some living persons as they deserved. The word 'anecdote' is compounded from the Greek *ἀν* (an) not, *ἐκ* (ek) out, and *δότα* (dota) given. It thus means a fact not given out or put forth—an unpublished story. Though this was its original meaning, every one, of course, knows that we have now whole volumes of published anecdotes.

The ending 'ation' is, in English, chiefly applied to Latin roots ; as in 'consultation,' 'creation,' 'donation,' &c. It is said that Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, was the first to use the word '*starvation*,' which he introduced in one of his speeches in the House of Commons, on the American war, 1775. Here we had, for the first time, a Saxon root—'starve'—with a Latin ending—'ation ;' a hybrid formation. From this circumstance, we are told that Mr. Dundas was ever afterwards called by his acquaintances, 'Starvation Dundas.' But whatever objection may have been made to it, the word has now taken a firm hold on the language, and is used by the best writers as a perfectly legitimate term.

The mania of modern times for grand terms has produced some very curious words. Tradesmen, in advertising some new invention or article for sale, almost always endeavour to attract public attention towards it by giving

it an unusually grand name, generally from a Greek source, but often a strange combination. To take a few cases of these mysterious compounds:—‘*Rypophagon*’ Soap. This, it may be presumed, means dirt-eating, or dirt-consuming, soap. But, as all soap cleanses the skin, why should this sort be designated as particularly cleansing? Simply to sell the article. Indeed, we can hardly walk far in the streets of London without seeing some fantastic term of this sort paraded in the shop windows. The hair-dresser exhibits his ‘*Auricomous*’ Fluid; and the son of Crispin his ‘*Antigropelos*’ Boots. These meet us at every turn. One tradesman has lately advertised a machine which he thinks proper to call a ‘*Dotosthene*,’ by which, we may conjecture, he means, an instrument for strengthening the back.

Some years ago the writer, walking up Oxford Street, became aware of a fellow carrying on his back before him a huge placard, on which was inscribed the strange word ‘*Therapolegeia*.’ This was a decided poser. On rubbing up his Greek, however, he at length discovered that this curious word might possibly mean, ‘an office for the registry of servants;’ and so it turned out. But which of the two parties—the ladies who wished to hire the servants, or the servants who

wanted to be hired—best understood the word ‘Therapolegeia’ is a problem still to be solved.

Tailors—I beg their pardon, *Merchant Clothiers*!—now persist in calling coats and waist-coats ‘tunics’ and ‘vests;’ and as for ‘trousers;’ the word is considered far too gross for ears polite! And what has become of ladies’ bonnets? They are gone—departed—vanished! but they have left their ghosts behind them, in the shape of a wretched little bunch of silk and ribbons, dignified by the name of ‘Head-dress!’

Some of these outlandish compounds are not very intelligible. One of them—‘Orthopædic’—is a term applied to an institution lately established in Oxford Street, for operating on club-feet. The name is probably intended to raise the establishment in public estimation, but the form of the word has justly called forth the censure of some critics. If this word, as seems probable, is meant to convey the idea of ‘straight-footed,’ the third syllable should be formed from the Greek *ποῦς*, *ποδός*, a foot, and the whole word should stand ‘orthopodic,’ and not ‘orthopædic.’

‘Stereotype,’ a term now commonly known to printers, and, indeed, to general readers, was invented and first used by Didot, the well-known French printer. This word will certainly maintain its place in English.

The adjective 'inimical' is said to owe its origin to Mr. Windham, who first introduced it in one of his speeches in the House of Commons about eighty years ago. It is useful to mark a distinction between private and public enmity; 'inimical' having the first, and 'hostile' the second, meaning. But the word is not very popular, in spite of its four syllables, and does not appear to make its way.

The great French Revolution of 1789, as might have been expected, brought forth many new words, some of which have been adopted in English. One, destined to become a very prominent feature of the times, was 'Guillotine.' This well-known instrument was named after its inventor, Dr. Guillotin. How or why they made it feminine, by adding to it an *e*, is not clear; but the word now stands '*La Guillotine*,' and has secured for itself a permanent place in the French language.

Other words which were the offspring of those dreadful times have disappeared from common use and parlance, and are only occasionally referred to as memorials of the age which produced them. Such are the new names then given to the months; as 'Brumaire,' 'Vendémiaire,' 'Fructidor,' 'Thermidor,' &c. When the fury of the revolutionary spirit was at length exhausted, and things were

brought back to their former condition, these words naturally fell into disuse, and at last disappeared. There were, however, others belonging to this period which seem to have taken a stronger hold on the people's mind, and which form to this day part of the legitimate vocabulary of the French language. In this class may be named 'fusillade' and 'noyade : ' those horrible wholesale shootings and drownings of the Vendéans which formed such a frightful picture of that awful period. 'Terroriste' first appeared under Robespierre's administration ; and the assassins of the unfortunate prisoners in September 1792 were termed 'Septembriseurs.'

It is natural to suppose that political names would be born with the parties which they designate. The terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' were never heard of till the close of the seventeenth century ; and it is curious that there is much obscurity concerning the etymology of both these words. All that is positively known on the subject is, that the first is of Scotch, and the second of Irish, origin. 'Whig' was first applied to the Scotch covenanters, and 'Tory' to the Popish outlaws who favoured the cause of King James II. in Ireland. It may be remarked, by the way, that these two words, though not wholly extinct, are now much less frequently heard than formerly. Different circum-

stances of political warfare have introduced new terms in both these cases. 'Tories' became 'Protectionists' during the great debates on the Corn-Laws; and now they call themselves 'Conservatives.' The Whigs, again, appeared on one occasion as 'Reformers,' and they are at present known as 'Liberals.'

The name 'Puritan,' as applied to a religious sect, still flourishes in English. It was first heard of in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and then given as a nickname to a party which would have even reformed the Reformation. These 'Puritans' affected a superhuman purity of morals, and hence their name. They were also sometimes called 'Precisians,' from their excessive fastidiousness about insignificant matters (this latter word has now fallen out of use).

The distinction between 'Roundhead' and 'Cavalier' first appeared during the civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament. The 'Roundhead,' in his sour and sullen spirit, condemned all outward ornament, and wore his hair cropped close; thus showing the *round* form of his *head*; in contradistinction to the chivalrous tone, the romantic spirit, and the *flowing locks* of the Cavalier.

The opprobrious term '*Gueux*' (Beggars) was adopted in 1566 by the Dutch revoltors against the rule of Philip II. Margaret of Parma, then



governor of the Netherlands, being somewhat disconcerted at the numbers of that party, was reassured by her minister, Barlaimont, who remarked to her, that there was nothing to be feared from a crowd of 'beggars.' The party of confederates accepted this name, and prided themselves on it; and in every language in which the history of the revolt of the Netherlands has been written, this French term, 'gueux,' is used to designate these malcontents.

Many popular authors, presuming on their own authority, have endeavoured to introduce new and strange terms into the English language. Coleridge, in his work 'On Church and State,' makes use of the following extraordinary words:—'Influencive,' 'extroitive,' 'retroitive,' and 'productivity.' Bentley uses:—'Commentitious,' 'aliene,' 'negoce,' and 'exscribe.' But no other writers adopted these words: a clear proof that they were not wanted.

Charles Lamb used, in his writings, several words which have not succeeded in maintaining a place in the language. Among them may be named, 'agnise,' 'burgeon,' and 'arride.'

Again, any subject of temporary excitement will generally give birth to some new words. The Indian Mutiny gave us 'to loot;' and during the American civil war, we made our first acquaintance



with 'secesh,' 'skedaddle,' and 'stampede.' Words born under such circumstances may be long- or short-lived: some maintain a place in the language, others have but a brief existence; they 'fret their hour upon the stage,' and then are heard no more.

We have also many examples of words which originated in some question of passing interest, and which, though the causes of their first appearance have long since passed away, still remain in our language, and do us excellent service there. The general belief in astrology in the Middle Ages left us several words of this class. Though we no longer believe that the position of the stars can affect our fortunes, we still use the word 'disaster,' in the sense of a calamity or misfortune. From the same source come the adjectives, 'jovial,' 'mercurial,' 'martial,' and 'saturnine.' These express qualities supposed to belong to those heathen gods whose names were given to the constellation under which any one was born. In astrological phraseology a man's fortune is still said to be *in the ascendant*, or to *culminate*. Both these expressions were first used by the astrologers, and referred to certain stars which, when they had risen to their greatest height, were believed to portend prosperity. The word 'aspect,' though now expressing the general appearance of things, was first applied, astrologically, to the

physical appearance or outward view of the heavens ; and ‘lunatic’ was first used in the sense of one supposed to be mentally affected by a change of the moon.

Other superstitions have produced words of a like nature. The ancient Roman divination may be still traced in our English words ‘augur,’ ‘auspice,’ ‘omen,’ &c. The left hand was always regarded by the ancients as portending ill-luck ; and hence our modern word ‘sinister,’ which at first meant simply ‘left-handed,’ has now come to signify ‘foreboding evil.’

‘Its,’ the possessive form of the neuter personal pronoun, is of comparatively late introduction into our language. In Anglo-Saxon, the same form served for both the masculine and neuter possessive ; thus :—

	m.		f.		n.
Nom.	He . . .	heo . . .	hit.		
Gen.	His . . .	hire . . .	his.		

At first, the nominative neuter, ‘it,’ was used for the possessive neuter, of which many instances occur in Shakspeare. See ‘King John,’ act. ii. sc. 1 : ‘Go to *it* grandame, child.’ The same may be found in the authorised version of the Scriptures (of 1611) ; see Leviticus xxv. 5 : ‘That which groweth of “*it*” own accord.’ But in this translation the word ‘its’ is not once found.

Genesis i. 11 : 'The tree yielding fruit after *his* kind.' Mark. ix. 50 : 'If the salt have lost *his* saltness,' &c. Milton avoids the use of 'its.' It seldom occurs in his prose works, and there are not more than three or four instances of it in his poems. The precise date and occasion of the first introduction of '*its*' into the English language have not been ascertained, but it was probably early in the seventeenth century. It is said that the 'Rowley's Poems' of Chatterton was detected to be a forgery by the presence of the word '*its*' several times in the MS. Rowley was represented as a monk of the fifteenth century, when the word was certainly not in the language.

### *New French Words.*

M. Génin, in his chapter on the age of certain French words and phrases, mentions the following cases : \*—

1. 'Désagrément' and 'renaissance ;' mentioned by Père Bouhours as new words in 1675, two years after the death of Molière.

2. 'Insidieux' and 'sécurité ;' established in the language by Malherbe.

3. 'Sagacité ;' first found in the works of St.-Réal and Balzac.

\* See Génin, *Variations du Langage français*, p. 312.

4. The sixteenth century was remarkable for an irruption of diminutives, introduced chiefly by the influence of Ronsard and his school. Most of these are now lost; but two of them, viz. 'historiette' and 'amourette,' are retained.

5. It was Ménage who first used the word 'prosateur.'

6. The negative words 'intolérance,' 'inexpérimenter,' 'indévot,' 'irrégulier,' and 'impardonnable' were subjects of much discussion about the end of the seventeenth century, and did not take root in the language till the eighteenth.

7. The Abbé St.-Pierre first used the word 'bien-faisance.'

8. St.-Évremond discusses the word 'vaste,' remarking that it was then new, and not firmly established.

9. Ronsard first used 'avidité,' and 'ode;' and Baïf introduced 'épigramme,' 'aigredoux,' and 'élégie.'

10. In the seventeenth century, the literati of the Hôtel Rambouillet produced several new words: Ségrais gave to the French language 'impardonnable;' Desmarets, 'plumeux;' and Balzac, 'féliciter.'

The members of the Port-Royal also furnished their contingent of new words, which the Jesuits of course condemned as ridiculous and detestable.

Among these new terms were 'hydrie' and 'amphore.' The first appears in a translation of Ecclesiastes xii. 6: 'Antequam conteratur *hydria* ad fontem'—'Before the *pitcher* be broken at the well.' The second, 'amphore,' was used in a translation of Horace's ode, 'Ad Amphoram.' But 'hydrie' was not destined to live, and has become obsolete; 'amphore' is still retained.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DEGENERACY OF WORDS.

ONE point to be observed in the nature and history of words is their tendency to contract in form and degenerate in meaning. A word which, in the beginning of its career, has generally a favourable, or at any rate a not disparaging, meaning, becomes, as it grows older, weaker in effect and more contracted in form and signification, and, in most cases, falls into an unfavourable sense. It does not improve or extend, but contracts and deteriorates in meaning. Archbishop Trench uses this fact as an argument to prove the perversity and evil tendencies of mankind; and it must be admitted to have considerable force. Take the two verbs, to 'resent' and to 'retaliate.' The first of these means, etymologically, 'to feel back,' or 'feel in return.' Of course, one may feel kindly or unkindly, according to circumstances; but we now never use this word in a

favourable sense. We are never said to '*resent*' kindness or affection; but only injury, slander, ill deeds, &c. Again, the derivation of '*retaliate*' is from the Latin '*re*' (back) and '*talis*' (such); and it would naturally signify, 'to give back such' (as we have received). But we now retaliate offences or indignities, and never favours or benefits. These words were, however, once used in a much more extended sense. Dr. South, a celebrated preacher of Charles II.'s time, in one of his sermons has the expression, '*resenting* God's favours,' which, according to the present restricted meaning of the word, would seem to a modern reader positively blasphemous. But in the seventeenth century the word '*resent*' implied good as well as bad feeling; gratitude for benefits received as well as anger for injury done.

This tendency to degenerate will appear, perhaps, more evidently if we inquire into the original source of certain English words which are now used as the strongest terms of reproach in the language. Among these may be named, '*thief*,' '*villain*,' and '*vagabond*.'

The first is of Saxon origin. '*Theow*' was a term originally applied to one of the servile classes of the Anglo-Saxon population, and in its first sense implied no reproach. But, as people in this position had many temptations to fraud and



deceit, the word at length came to have its modern signification ; i.e. it degenerated into the present meaning of 'thief.'

'*Villanus*' was, in Latin, first used in the sense of a farm-servant ; but as those in this capacity acquired a bad reputation by their immorality and brutal violence, the whole class was stigmatised ; and thus the word 'villain' now conveys, as every one knows, a very different sense from that of farm-servant.

There is no particular reproach conveyed in the etymology of '*vagabond*.' It meant at first simply a wanderer. But as the habits of a wanderer are likely to become unsteady, irregular, and reckless, this term, in course of time, degenerated into its present acceptation. It is now always associated with the ideas of a loose morality and want of sobriety.

'*Prejudice*' is another of those words which have gradually got rid of their favourable meaning, and are, in most cases, used in a bad sense. It is true, we sometimes say 'prejudiced *in favour* of' some person or thing ; but, without this specification, there is always a leaning towards the bad sense of the word. And yet the derivation shows simply, 'a *judgment* formed *before* sufficient reflection,' whether favourable or otherwise.

In the same class may be placed '*animosity*.'

In Latin, 'animosus' meant courageous, full of soul, vigour, and ardour. Now, it is wholly confined to the sense of a violent feeling of anger, hatred, and resentment. In fine, it has lost all its beauty. There is no longer the least trace of anything noble in the word 'animosity.'

The words '*simple*' and '*simplicity*' still retain something of their original charm, but it is much to be feared that they are more frequently used in a contemptuous sense. We speak of a '*simple*' fellow, as of one who is easily cheated or duped; one wanting in shrewdness; anything but '*knowing*;' which, by the way, is another term which has degenerated into an unfavourable acceptance.

It may seem strange, but it is certainly true, that the word '*good*,' which is naturally associated with everything high, pure, and noble, both in morals and intellect, has partaken of this general tendency downwards, and is often used in the sense of 'able to pay,' or 'having sufficient means to discharge' debts. This use of the word is found in the language as far back as Shakspeare's time. In the '*Merchant of Venice*,' Shylock says to Bassanio:—'*Antonio is a good man?*' and when Bassanio asks him 'if he has heard any imputation to the contrary,' he replies:—'*My meaning in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me that he is sufficient.*'

This is still the common acceptation of the word with city men ; with them, a *good* man is one who has a large balance at his banker's.

If we look into the original meaning of the word '*cunning*,' we shall find that it was not at first used in its present bad sense. This is one of a numerous Saxon family, based upon the type '*kn*,' or '*cn*;' as '*ken*,' '*know*,' '*can*,' '*king*,' '*cunning*,' &c. We find in Psalms cxxxvii. 5 :— 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her "*cunning*,"' where the word is used for skill or art. This meaning is now seldom applied, while the word has kept its sense of deceit or slyness.

The same may be said of '*craft*.' It had at first a good as well as a bad sense. It meant ability or dexterity, as well as fraud or artifice. Now its bad meaning is in the ascendant. If the favourable sense is sometimes intended, this is the exception, not the rule.

Indeed, there are many English words which, though not taken in a positively unfavourable sense, have yet a tendency that way—which require qualifying, if we wish them to be understood favourably. For instance, if we speak of any one's '*curiosity*,' meaning that he has an inquiring spirit, it will be necessary to explain that we mean a well-directed, and not a prying, imper-

tinent curiosity ; for, without that explanation, it will be certainly understood in the latter sense. In fine, when there are two meanings to a word, a right and a wrong, the evil is sure to prevail.

The words '*critic*' and '*criticise*' are in precisely the same condition. These words do not of necessity imply fault-finding. A critic is simply a judge ; he may have to praise as well as to blame ; but every one knows full well that to '*criticise*' is generally looked upon as synonymous with '*to censure*,' and, unless qualified, is sure to be understood in the latter sense.

In the very copious vocabulary of words which have '*fallen from their high estate*,' or undergone a pernicious transformation, may be also ranged the word '*fellow*.' In some cases it retains a certain respectability, as when we speak of the '*Fellow of a college*.' Shakspeare makes Hamlet say of Yorick, the jester :—'*He was a "fellow" of infinite jest*,' where the sense is certainly not intended to be disparaging. But now-a-days '*fellow*' is, on the whole, not looked upon very favourably. It is suggestive of recklessness and disorderly conduct, and, unless qualified, is not a very complimentary term.

As to the word '*knave*,' it is irrecoverably lost. It is the lowest and most degrading term we can apply as a reproach and an insult ; and yet it

meant originally nothing more than 'boy,' as 'Knabe' does to this day in German. By what process the 'boy' became a 'knave' may be a speculation, but the word has obviously lost its former good name.

This perversity of human nature in turning words into an opposite and unfavourable meaning may also be seen in many familiar and every-day forms of speech. It is not uncommon to hear an abandoned fellow spoken of as a 'precious' scoundrel, or some absurdity referred to as 'blessed' nonsense. This perversion is not confined to English. The French often use the word 'sacré' in a sense diametrically opposed to 'holy,' a meaning which existed in Latin, from which French is derived. Virgil's 'auri "*sacra*" fames' is properly translated 'accursed lust for gold.' The Latin 'altus' also conveyed the distinct and opposite meanings of 'high' and 'deep.'

Also the English word 'silly' has degenerated from 'selig,' which in German preserves its meaning of 'blessed;' and 'ninny' took its origin from the Spanish 'niño,' where it means simply 'a child.'

Another example of a change for the worse may be seen in the word 'prevent.' The Church Service gives us this word in the literal sense of 'to go before, or guide : ' *Prevent* us, O Lord, in all our doings,' &c ; and in the Collect for the 17th Sun-

day after Trinity :—‘ We pray Thee that Thy grace may always “*prevent*” and follow us.’ But this is not the present sense of the word ; it has now always the meaning of ‘ to stop,’ rather than to guide onwards—the very opposite of its former signification. This, like other words, has degenerated.

### *Contradictory Meanings.*

Connected with this degeneracy of words is one very curious phenomenon, viz. that in English we frequently meet with the same word in two distinct meanings, directly opposed to each other. For example, the verb ‘ to let ’ has generally the meaning of ‘ to give leave,’ or ‘ allow.’ This is its ordinary acceptation, but in the still common legal phrase, ‘ without let or hindrance,’ it has the very opposite meaning.<sup>1</sup> Again, Hamlet says :—‘ I’ll make a ghost of him that ‘lets’ me,’ i.e. him that interferes with or hinders me, where the sense is again the very reverse of the usual meaning.

The verb ‘ to cleave ’ is another case of this contradiction of meaning. ‘ To cleave ’ may mean

<sup>1</sup> In some cases, this difference of meaning may be accounted for by a difference of etymology. ‘ To let,’ in the sense of ‘ to hinder,’ is from the Saxon verb ‘ letjan ;’ but when it means ‘ to allow,’ it is from the Saxon ‘ lætan.’ See Mätzner, *Englische Grammatik*, vol. i. p. 189.



either 'to adhere to closely' or 'to cut asunder.'<sup>1</sup> When we say the tongue '*cleaves*' to the roof of the mouth, it is used in the first sense; but the directly opposite meaning is implied when people talk of '*cleaving*' wood, i.e. cutting it into parts.

We may use the word 'fast' in two senses, opposed to each other. It conveys the idea either of quiet rest or of rapid motion. 'The door was *fast* locked,' means that it was fixed and not to be moved; whereas in the sentence, 'He runs *fast*,' it expresses quickness of motion..

To this class also belongs 'nervous,' which means either *possessing*, or *wanting* nerve. When ladies are said to be 'nervous,' we understand that they are weak, timid, easily frightened; in fine, wanting nerve. On the other hand, a 'nervous' style is one marked by vigour and energy. One use of the word represents the absence, and the other the presence, of nerve.

When Shakspeare makes Hamlet say, 'Would I had met my *dearest* foe in heaven,' he means, 'my most hated foe.' As extremes are said to meet, so does this word express the extremes of love and hatred.

The adjective 'fearful' will also illustrate this

<sup>1</sup> 'To cleave,' meaning 'to adhere to,' is from the Anglo-Saxon 'cleofan,' 'clufan;' but in the sense of 'to split,' it is from 'clifan,' 'clifian.' See Mätzner, vol. i. p. 202.



principle. It means either 'affected by fear' or 'inspiring fear.' The word 'mortal' is in the same condition. Its usual sense is 'subject to death,' but it is also used subjectively, as 'producing death.' Hence the difference between a 'mortal wound' and a 'mortal being.'

'To look' may be understood in two opposed senses. When we say, 'a man *looks* well into his affairs,' the word is used in its active meaning; but if we should say, 'he *looks* well,' it would mean that he appears to others to be in good health.

The word 'mistaken' also is equivocal in meaning. 'I am mistaken' may mean 'I make a mistake,' or 'Others mistake me.' This per-  
versity appears in various forms. When we say that a tradesman '*sells* his goods,' the word 'sells' is employed in a subjective sense; but we not unfrequently hear that his goods *sell* well, where the same term is used objectively. In these cases, the active form is used in a passive sense, and not *vice versâ*. 'A *walking*-stick' does not mean a stick that walks, but a stick to be walked with. Nor is a '*drinking* cup' one that drinks, but one to be drunk out of.

This difference of subjective and objective meaning may be especially observed in that class of adjectives which ends in 'able' or 'ible;' such as, '*portable*,' '*pliable*,' '*visible*,' '*legible*,' &c.

Most of these words have a passive or objective sense. 'Portable' means 'that which *can be carried*;' 'visible,' 'that which *can be seen*.' But some of these convey an active or subjective meaning. For example, 'comfortable' does not mean '*what can be comforted*;' but '*that which comforts*.' A 'comfortable' house or room is one which comforts the inmates. 'Terrible,' again, does not mean 'capable of receiving terror;' but able to produce that feeling in others. A 'terrible' accident is one which inspires terror in the beholders. This active or subjective meaning is, however, the exception. Most of this class of words are used in a passive or recipient sense.

Another case in which this contrariety of meaning may be observed is in the use of the prefix '*in*.' This prefix has, in general, the force of a negative; as may be seen in the words '*incomplete*,' '*incapable*,' '*indelible*,' &c. But there are certain adjectives in which it conveys a positive or intensive meaning, i.e. the very opposite to the negative. When we say that some one's health was '*invigorated*,' we do not mean that it was weakened; but, on the contrary, that it was very much strengthened. Instead of depriving the word of any of its meaning, the '*in*' here adds force to its positive signification. Some of this class are, '*intense*,' '*infatuated*,' '*inveterate*,' '*invalu-*

able;' but most of them are used in a negative sense.

We occasionally meet with much confusion of sense in the application of some English words. We commonly say that a man *marries* a woman, and also that a woman *marries* a man; in addition to which, the clergyman *marries* them both. Perhaps, as the word 'marry' is derived from the French 'mari,' and the Latin 'maritus,' a husband—which is from 'mas, maris,' a male, and marks a difference of sex—it would be better to say, a man 'marries' a woman, and a woman 'is married to' a man; and the priest joins them in marriage. The use of the good old Saxon word 'wed' would obviate all these difficulties; but, unfortunately, it is now much out of fashion, and indeed rapidly disappearing from the language, though the noun 'wedding' still holds its place.

There is a tendency to contract or restrict in meaning certain words of our language whose etymology would allow of their being used much more extensively. This, in many instances, seems to be caused by that deteriorating principle before mentioned; for, in all these cases, the favourable meaning is ignored, and the bad one retained. The word 'condign' is never used but with 'punishment,' though its meaning might be reasonably applied to honours, merits, or rewards.

‘Condign’ rewards would be rewards worthy of the receiver’s actions. ‘Condign’ honours would mean honours appropriate to certain merits, &c.

The adjective ‘inveterate’ is in precisely the same predicament. It is never applied to a good feeling, but always to some bad passion. We commonly hear of inveterate resentment, malice, hatred, animosity, &c.; but we never meet with inveterate love, kindness, affection, or attachment. And yet why not? The true meaning of ‘inveterate’ is *what has gained strength by age*; and it is clear that this quality would apply reasonably enough to such feelings as love, kindness, or affection. An anecdote is told of Lord Byron, that in a letter to one of his friends, he subscribed himself, ‘Yours inveterately, BYRON.’ This was, of course, done in a playful spirit; but the word was perfectly well applied; and it is a pity that this example had not been generally followed.

In this class we may place the words ‘animadvert’ and ‘insinuate.’ The first of these signifies literally to notice or observe (*animus vertere ad*), to turn the mind to; but there is always coupled with it the idea of censure or punishment. But surely we may observe in order to praise as well as to blame!

Again, ‘to insinuate’ is generally connected with a crooked procedure of the mind. When people

'insinuate,' the result looked for is rather evil than good. It is opposed to a straightforward mode of action.

On the other hand, certain French words have been admitted into English in one sense, which many writers show a disposition to extend. But this should be checked, and these words should be confined to their legitimate meaning. For example: the French verb '*demander*' is properly translated into English by 'to ask.' In English, '*to demand*' should be only used in the sense of to ask as a right, in a case where justice must be satisfied, and should not be applied to general cases. The French say, '*demander pardon*,' but we English 'beg'—we do not '*demand*'—pardon.

'To *assist*,' meaning to do a service, is good English; but in the sense of 'to be present,' it is French, and not English. We may '*assist*' a man in his work, or by giving him advice, &c., but we cannot properly write that some one '*assisted*' at a supper, if we mean that he was one of the guests.

To '*arrive*' is another of the French words adopted in English whose sense must not be stretched beyond its legitimate bounds. When it signifies 'to come to,' it is properly applied; but in the sense of 'to happen,' it is not English. We may say, 'Our friends are arrived;' but

we must not ask, 'What has arrived?' if we mean 'What has happened?'

The verb 'to *accord*' is constantly used for 'to give,' or 'to grant,' probably because it has two syllables instead of one. 'To accord with' is properly used in the sense of 'to agree,' or 'to suit,' as:—'This arrangement "accords" with my views;' but to say that 'he "accorded" his friends the use of his library,' would be a wrong application of the word. In the phrase, 'according with,' the word is a participle; in 'according to,' it is a preposition.

The mistake made in the word '*allude*' is in using it for 'to mention' or 'to state.' 'To allude' properly means merely to hint at, or suggest; and it should never be used in the other sense. This, again, seems to arise from the idea that it is not so common a word as the others, and it is therefore adopted—as if the object of writing should be to confuse and puzzle the reader!

Now and then, however, we meet with words which retain their first favourable acceptance, and have not been degraded to a lower sense. Some few, indeed, have been ennobled, i.e. raised from a comparatively humble meaning to a higher dignity. In the first of these classes we may place the verb '*to reward*;' and we are labouring under a certain difficulty in consequence of its being con-



fined to the one meaning. We very much want a word which would signify a just return for ill deeds; for, though we use the noun 'retribution' for this purpose, the verb 'to retribute' is not in common use. The verb 'to reward' is always used in a favourable sense. We can hardly say that 'a felon was *rewarded* for his crimes.' We speak of the 'rewards' of goodness or virtue, but not of the 'rewards' of wickedness or immorality.

Of those words which have been elevated in meaning, we may mention 'angel,' 'martyr,' and 'Paradise;' all three referring to religious matters. These are all of Greek origin. 'Angel,' from ἄγγελος, was at first merely 'a messenger;' but it is now used only in a higher sense—'a messenger of God.' We certainly should not think of calling an errand-boy 'an angel.' 'Martyr,' from μάρτυρος, a witness, is now applied only to one who by his death bore witness to the truth of Christianity. A witness who gives evidence in a trial cannot now be called a martyr. Again, 'Paradise,' from παράδεισος, has been raised from the ordinary sense of 'garden' to that of Garden of Eden, or place of bliss. Cases of this sort are, however, comparatively rare.



## CHAPTER V.

## PLAY UPON WORDS.

THERE are, in all languages, certain words which may be called equivocal. Such are either those which are spelled exactly alike and have different meanings, or are spelled differently and yet have the same pronunciation. In most of these cases the two terms have no necessary connection with each other, though it has probably puzzled many a reader that the same word should have such a variety of meanings so distinctly different from each other. This phenomenon may be accounted for in English by the condition of our language, especially its mixed nature. English draws words from a multiplicity of sources. It frequently happens that several distinctly different forms of foreign words fall into one and the same form when incorporated into English, each of them retaining its original signification. This may explain how the word '*light*' may mean something

that burns bright, and may also have the sense of 'not heavy.' In the first case, it is derived from the Anglo-Saxon verb 'leohtan;' but, as an adjective, it comes from the Saxon 'liht,' whence also is derived the verb 'to light' (or 'to alight'), i.e. to come down gently. The verb 'to lighten,' in an electrical sense, is connected with the first meaning; but 'to lighten,' meaning to make less heavy, is from the second.

But it sometimes happens that the same root will produce two different meanings; and of this the word '*court*' will furnish an example. In the Middle Ages, the yard or court attached to every castle (so called from the French '*cour*') was used for two purposes: 1st, as a place for games or amusements; and, 2nd, where criminals were tried and sentenced. This is why a king's palace is still called 'a Court.' We say 'the Court of St. James,' or 'the Court of the Tuileries,' &c.; and this is also why buildings where law proceedings are carried on have the same name; as in 'the Court of Queen's Bench,' 'the Court of Exchequer,' &c.

The adjective 'fine,' in the sense of handsome or beautiful, is from the Saxon 'fein,' where it had the same meaning; but, in the expression 'in fine,' it is from the French 'enfin,' and the Latin 'finis,' an end or boundary. Again, the noun 'fine,' meaning a sum of money paid as a compensation for

a misdemeanour, is from the same source, 'finis;' for here it means the limit or *end* to which the law confines the magistrate in determining that sum—'Not more than forty shillings,' &c.

Another of this class is the noun '*sack*.' In its ordinary acceptation it means a large bag, and is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'sacc' and the Latin 'saccus.' Hence comes the verb. 'To 'sack' a city is to carry off the plunder in a 'bag.' But another meaning of this word is found in 'sack,' a sort of wine. Here it is a corruption of the French 'sec' (originally the Latin 'siccus'), dry. 'Un vin sec' is what we should call 'a *dry* wine.'

These double meanings have probably in all nations given rise to various perversions and corruptions of the language. One of these—viz. punning—has been particularly prominent in modern times, and has, in some degree, infected the great majority of writers. Though the nations of antiquity seem to have been comparatively free from this literary vice, there are not wanting examples of it in the ancient classics. There is a collection of so-called jokes, or silly sayings of pedants, attributed to Hierocles, though it is now believed to have been the work of another hand. Most of these would be now considered intolerably stupid; and the only one among them that has the least approach to wit is the story of the father who

writes to his son urging him to study hard, as he would have to *live* by his books. To this the son replies, that he had been already *living* by his books for some time, as he had been obliged to sell them. In Latin a softened expression for 'a thief' was 'homo trium literarum,' a man of three letters (f. u. r.); and Disraeli the elder mentions in his 'Curiosities of Literature' two puns attributed to Cicero.

But the true source of modern punning must be looked for in Italy, where it took rise after the revival of learning in the fifteenth century, and whence this practice afterwards spread into all the languages of Europe. In English, the vice of playing on words infected all the writers of the Elizabethan period. Puns are sown broadcast in Shakspeare's plays—even Milton is by no means free from them; and it is hardly necessary to state that they form a prominent feature in the drama and light literature of the present day.

Addison defines a pun, in the sixty-first number of the 'Spectator,' as 'a conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the sound, but differ in the sense.' Now the punster deals in these equivocal words; and his whole art consists in using them in one sense where we should naturally expect another. There are in English several classes of equivocal words:—

I. Where the same form has several meanings, as 1. 'Fair' (beautiful, or light-coloured). 2. 'Fair' (just, or equitable). 3. 'Fair' (a market-place).

II. Where two words of different meaning are pronounced alike, though spelled differently; as 'son' and 'sun,' 'some' and 'sum,' 'sole' and 'soul,' 'peer' and 'pier,' &c.

III. A third class is of those which are spelled differently, and pronounced nearly, though not quite, alike; such as 'baron' and 'barren,' 'season' and 'seizing,' &c.; though these more frequently produce Malaprops than puns.

IV. There are also many cases in which a phrase or idiom, consisting of two or three words, may be used equivocally, and these may be fairly considered as puns.

Of the first class the following are specimens:—

1. . . . beauty's purchased by the *weight*,  
Which therein works a miracle in nature,  
Making them *lightest* that wear most of it.

*Merchant of Venice*, Act iii. sc. 2.

2. At one light *bound* high overleaped all *bound*.

*Paradise Lost*, Book iv.

3. Dean Ramsay tells a story of a Scotch minister who, having to preach at some distance from home, was caught in a shower of rain. On arriving at his kirk, he got a friend to rub down

his clothes, anxiously asking if he thought he was *dry* enough. The latter replied, 'Never fear; you'll be *dry* enough when you get into the pulpit!'

Under the second division may be placed such puns as the following:—

1. Not on thy *sole*, but on thy *soul*, harsh Jew,  
Thou makest thy knife keen.  
*Merchant of Venice*, Act iv. sc. 1.
2. I should be still  
*Peering* in maps for ports, and *piers*, and roads.  
*Ib.*, Act i. sc. 1.

3. A story being told in the presence of Theodore Hook of an author who invited his publisher to dinner, and treated him to a great variety of wines—'Then,' said the wit, 'I suppose he poured his wine-cellar into his book-seller.'

4. They went and *told* the sexton,  
And the sexton *tolled* the bell.—*Hood*.
5. I find  
The shadow of myself formed in her eye,  
Which, being but the shadow of your *son*,  
Becomes a *sun*, and makes your *son* a shadow.  
*King John*, Act i. sc. 2.

To the third class belong such cases as:—

1. That of the lady who said that her doctor had put her on a new *regiment*, and allowed her to drink nothing but water. 'Ah!' replied some one present, 'that must have been the *cold-stream*.'



2. Under this head also come the sayings of Mrs. Malaprop in the 'Rivals,' who talks of the '*contagious*' (for contiguous) countries; and who recommends a nice *derangement* (arrangement) of *epitaphs* (epithets), &c.

3. It is a positive vulgarism to confound '*genus*' (a class, or sort) with '*genius*' (a high intellectual power). This is exactly what Goldsmith meant, when he put into Tony Lumpkin's mouth:—

Good liquor, I'll stoutly maintain,  
Gives *genus* a better discerning.

In the fourth class may be placed punning by the use of an equivocal phrase.

1. It was this form of the pun that Sydney Smith used when, hearing of a boy who always read the word '*patriarchs*' as '*partridges*,' declared it was too bad *to make game* of them in that way.

2. In this class we may also place Douglas Jerrold's well-known reply to a friend who told him he was afraid he was going to have a *brain fever*. 'Never fear, my friend,' said the wit, '*there is no foundation for the fact.*'

3. The story related of Sydney Smith, who recommended the bishops *laying their heads together* to make a wooden pavement, may be placed in the



same category, and here the wit is quite as pun-gent as in the other cases.

4. For if the Jew do but cut deep 'enough,  
I'll pay it instantly *with all my heart.*  
*Merchant of Venice.*

The instances of a play on words we meet with in Milton are not so much puns, properly so called, as what the Italians called conceits (congetti). This poet was deeply imbued with the spirit of Italian literature; and this form of it often appears in his verses. The following passages are examples:—

1. *Highly* they raged against the *Highest*.
2. *Surer* to prosper than *prosperity* could have assured us.

3. The same form appears occasionally in other poets. Cowper in his 'Conversation' has

His only *pleasure* is to be *displeased*.

One form of the pun which is just now not so frequently used is the following:—

1. 'There's *something in that*,' as the cat said when she peeped into the milk-jug.
2. 'I'm *transported* to see you,' as the convict said to the kangaroo.
3. 'You are *very pressing*,' as the nut said to the nutcracker, &c.

Punning has been generally considered a low form of wit; and some have taken so unfavourable

a view of it as even to declare that 'he who will make a pun will pick a pocket.' But all this is hardly just; for it may be easily shown that the highest minds have not hesitated to adopt it, and that in some writers it is a prominent feature of their style. It is true that critics have frequently condemned punning as a flaw in Shakspeare's style and manner; but it should be remembered that it was one form of that Italian tone which coloured all the English literature of the Elizabethan age, and from which no writer of those times was wholly free. We surely cannot utterly condemn any form of expression adopted by so great a master; and though it may be admitted that an immoderate use of puns should not usurp the place of the higher and more important qualities of style, there seems no good reason why they should be wholly excluded.

The late poet Thomas Hood was so remarkable for the way in which he used puns, that they formed an essential characteristic of his style. Though looked upon by the purist as a contemptible figure in literature, the pun proved in his hands a source of genuine humour, and sometimes of deepest pathos. It is a received axiom, that a keen perception of the ridiculous is a conclusive proof of real genius; and this opinion certainly holds good in his case. In him it was

perfectly compatible with the deepest sympathy and intensity of feeling. In every form of wit the effect consists chiefly in the novelty of the application presented by the figure. This always produces surprise—a naturally pleasing sensation, especially when caused by a ludicrous or grotesque image. But, in some instances, a pun suggests a far higher tone of thought than the mere ludicrous: it may be connected with or produce very sober reflections, or even occasionally lead the mind to a deeply philosophical speculation:—

. . . ridentem dicere verum  
Quid vetat?

In the popular conundrum which has been attributed to Burke, ‘What is (m)ajest(y), when deprived of its externals, but a jest?’ this effect may be observed, as well as in many of Hood’s puns.

In the literary history of all nations, we find languages affected by various peculiarities. Of these several, more or less connected with punning, have, at different periods, prevailed in English, viz. Alliteration, Rhyme, Euphuism, &c. Alliteration was the principle on which the Anglo-Saxon poets founded their versification. This has been called ‘head-rhyme,’ as distinguished from end-rhyme, which is a more modern practice. The lines were arranged in couplets grouped, not according to the sense, but to the alliteration, which required

that *two* accented syllables in the first, and *one* in the second line, should begin with the same letter when a consonant; and a different, if possible, when a vowel. These three initial letters were called ‘rhyming letters,’ the one in the second line being the *chief* letter, according to which the two in the first line of the couplet must be regulated. These two, though they come first, are therefore called ‘*sub*-letters.’ In a couplet, there should not be more than three accented syllables beginning with this letter; and the *chief* letter must begin the first accented syllable or word of the second line.

Finally: in very short verse, especially when the rhyming letters are double, such as *sc*, *st*, *sw*, &c., there need be but one *sub*-letter. This is the general doctrine of alliteration, invariably adopted in Saxon poetry.

The following specimen of alliteration, extracted from Rask’s Anglo-Saxon Grammar, may serve to illustrate this explanation:—

In Caines cynne . . .	In Cain’s kin
Done cwealm gewræc . . .	The murder avenged
Éce Drihten . . .	The Eternal Lord;
Paes pe he Abel slóg . . .	Because he slew Abel.
Ne gefeah he pære faehde . . .	He got no joy from his hatred
Ac he hine feor forwraec . . .	But he (the Creator) drove him
Metod for þý máne . . .	For that misdeed
Mancynne fram . . .	Far from the human race.

But though no longer considered as an essential element in English verse, alliteration was often employed by all our poets from Chaucer to Spenser, though not according to the strict rules above laid down. Spenser used it, in some cases, with much effect, as shown in the following lines from the 'Faëry Queen':—

In wilderness and wasteful deserts strayed,  
Through woods and wateness wild him daily sought.  
From her fair head her fillet she undight.  
And with the sight amazed, forgot his furious force.

There is more alliteration in our modern poets than most readers suspect; and though an immoderate use of this figure makes it degenerate into a mere fantastic puerility, many examples may be quoted where it adds a wonderful force to the expression. For example, in the following lines from Macbeth:—

That shall, to all our days and nights to come,  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

The grandeur of the effect is here powerfully assisted by the repetition of the letter *s*.

But the fondness of certain rhymesters for this figure was cleverly caricatured by the brothers Horace and James Smith, in their well-known 'Rejected Addresses':—

Lo! from Lemnos limping lamely,  
Lags the lowly Lord of Fire!

Rhyme may be almost considered a modern invention; it is seldom met with in Greek or Latin, and was unknown to the Saxon poets. This repetition of the same sound at the ends of verses was introduced into England by the Anglo-Norman ballad-writers at, or soon after, the Conquest. Since that time it has been regarded as one of the greatest embellishments of poetical expression, and it is now used in almost every form of poetry except blank verse. There is no doubt that it deserves this reputation, though here, as in other decorations, much of the effect depends on the judgment and taste with which it is applied. Many a beautiful thought has been probably sacrificed to the rigid requirements of rhyme; at the same time many so-called rhymes are so unlike each other in sound as scarcely to deserve the name.

The effect of rhyme is materially heightened when there is a real or fancied connection in meaning between the rhyming words; such as 'wine' and 'divine,' 'life' and 'strife,' 'fish' and 'dish,' 'lone' and 'moan,' &c. It is also curious to observe how often familiar proverbs are formed upon this principle. We have '*Birds of a feather flock together*;' '*'Twiixt cup and lip there's many a slip*;' '*Fast bind, fast find*;' '*No pains, no gains*;' &c. And this is not confined to English proverbs.



In the same way the Italians have, ‘*Chi va piano, va sano, e va lontano* ;’ and the Germans, ‘*Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund* ;’ ‘*Ueber Nacht ist wohl gedacht* ;’ ‘*Wer neidet, der leidet*,’ &c. The object in these cases was, probably, to produce a pleasing effect, and, at the same time, to assist the learner’s memory.

Another proof of the popularity of rhyme may be found in many double terms which are evidently formed on that principle. These, though not often met with in the higher styles of composition, are legitimate words in every-day and familiar conversation, and have every right to be so considered. Such are ‘*helter-skelter*,’ ‘*namby-pamby*,’ ‘*hoity-toity*,’ ‘*roly-poly*,’ ‘*harum-scarum*,’ ‘*willy-nilly*,’ ‘*nolens-volens*,’ ‘*hugger-mugger*,’ and a host of others.

A particularly ludicrous effect is frequently presented by double rhymes, which properly belong to the comic or burlesque in verse. Here there is often as much wit and humour in the rhyme as in the sentiment ; and here, also, the rhyme frequently approaches to the nature of a pun.

Butler was distinguished for his double rhymes, and in his ‘*Hudibras*’ he displays a positive genius for comic rhyme, some specimens of which follow :—



As if religion were intended  
For nothing else than to be *mended*.

Madam, I do, as is my *duty*,  
Honour the shadow of your *shoe tie*.

An ignis fatuus that bewitches,  
And leads men into pools and *ditches*.

He was, in logic, a great *critic*,  
Profoundly skilled in *analytic*.

Besides, he was a shrewd *philosopher*,  
And had read every text and *gloss over*.

Compound for sins they are inclined to,  
By damning those they have no *mind to*.

Another form of comic verse is where the rhyme is made by dividing the word, being formed by a similar sound in the middle syllables; as for example:—

Thou wast the daughter of my *Tu-*  
tor, Law professor in the *U-*  
niversity of Göttingen.—*Canning*.

At first I caught hold of the *wing*,  
And kept away; but Mr. *Thing-*  
umbob, the prompter man,  
Gave with his hand my chaise a shove,  
And said, 'Go on, my pretty love,  
Speak to 'em, little Nan.'—*Smith*.

John Lyly, a dramatist and poet of the Elizabethan period, is said to have originated a singular affectation of language known as 'Euphuism.' He was the author of a romance entitled 'Euphues;' in which the 'pure and reformed

English,' as he called it, first appeared. It became the fashion with the beauties of the court to 'parley Euphuism,' which was soon considered a necessary accomplishment for every one who had any pretensions to fashion or good taste. Euphuism was made up of almost every sort of folly of language combined, a mincing prettiness, alliteration, punning, pedantry, elaborate nonsense, and far-fetched expression; in fine, of almost every conceivable form of puerility. This was a mere passing absurdity, and the only remains of it still left in the language are said to be certain new modes of pronunciation then first introduced.

Language has been, like most other things, subject to many and various abuses. Anagrams, chronograms, acrostics, &c., have, each and all, 'fretted their hour upon the stage, and now are heard no more.' But the pun seems likely to maintain its place, both in conversation and in written composition. Let us not be misunderstood. It is not the practice, but the abuse of it, that is to be condemned. We are strongly of opinion that there can be no greater pest to society than the inveterate and professional punster—a man who sets traps for you, who lies in wait for every phrase you utter, to twist and turn it into a meaning of his own, and who is continually stopping the natural flow of discourse, and bringing it to

some 'lame and impotent conclusion.' But, as we have endeavoured to show, the pun, when 'telling' and well-applied, is as legitimate a form of wit as any other, and quite as conducive to good feeling and good fellowship.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT WORDS.

IN the order of nature, names would be first given to concrete objects and their qualities, and to visible acts, i.e. to those things and acts which are made known to us through the senses. But whatever may have been the principle which determined the original form of these words, it is well known that, in all languages, the same vocabulary was afterwards used in a mental or secondary sense. No new words were invented for the expression of thought or feeling, but all the acts of the mind and soul were represented by terms originally applied in a concrete sense. In a word, the abstract was derived from the concrete. The original concrete sense of the verb 'to see' was, to take in knowledge through the eye, but the same word was afterwards used abstractly. 'I see' may signify 'I have the proper use of my eyes;' and may also mean, 'I understand or perceive with my

mind.' A blind man cannot see in the first of these senses, though he may in the second. To hear, to taste, to touch, &c., have all these double meanings. There may be some words not found in a secondary sense ; but, on the other hand, a very large number have lost their original physical signification.

In English, most of the words which express operations of the mind are drawn from a Latin, French, or Greek source. These were all originally used in a concrete sense, which in English is now lost.

Horace, in his well-known ninth Satire, has :—

*Occurrit quidam notus mihi nomine tantum.*

'Occurrit' cannot be here translated by 'occurred.' The word, in English, has lost its concrete, and retains only its abstract, meaning. With us, ideas or thoughts may 'occur' to the mind, but we cannot properly speak of a friend 'occurring' (i.e. meeting) us in the street.

One essential difference between ancient and modern languages consists in the relation between abstract, or mental, and concrete expression. The languages of antiquity possessed a much nearer relation to the original, primary sense of words. In them, all the abstract had a much closer affinity with the concrete terms from which they were

derived. The Latin word 'spiritus' had not only its abstract meaning of 'cheerfulness,' or 'courage,' but also its concrete sense of 'breath;' whereas, in modern languages the word has only an abstract sense, and it is only by a knowledge of its etymology that we can get at its material origin. The result of this loss is most complete when a modern, formed upon an ancient language, is no longer in direct communication with the roots of the words used. In this respect ancient languages possessed a charm for which nothing can compensate, and, when in the hands of a great poet, they produced most wonderful effects. But the condition of modern languages is, in this respect, very different. Here, most of the abstract words, being deprived of their original concrete meaning, are, to the general reader, mere conventional signs, wholly unable to produce that vividly picturesque effect found in the ancient tongues. And herein chiefly lies the value of a knowledge of derivation. For, although a word may now have lost its original meaning, it is of the greatest importance that its primary signification should be known, in order to arrive at a clear knowledge of its exact and accurate modern application. We commonly speak of a man '*applying*' himself to his work. To the general reader this conveys the idea of giving his mind or attention to what he

is about; but to those who are ignorant of the etymology of the word 'applying,' the picture of the man *bending* his body to his task is wholly lost. And not only as regards the true meaning of the single word, but as concerns the difference in signification between terms apparently synonymous, this knowledge will be of the greatest importance. The difference in meaning between 'to instil' and 'to inculcate' is to be understood only by a knowledge of their etymology. To the ordinary reader both these words have the general meaning of 'to teach,' or instruct; but it is only he who knows the meaning of their roots who will understand that nice difference in the mode of teaching which they respectively describe. The process of 'dropping in' knowledge by degrees, conveyed by the former word, paints a very different picture from the 'stamping in' of the latter.

Some of our poets occasionally use abstract, especially Latin words, in a primary meaning, which they, properly, no longer possess. We may look upon this practice as a licence which may be conceded to poets; but we should never adopt it in common conversation, or in ordinary writing. Milton is especially addicted to this practice. When he speaks of 'Heaven's *afflicting* thunder,' he uses the word 'afflicting' in its original primary sense of striking down bodily. The reprobate



angels are thus represented as being hurled down from heaven. But this is not the present use of the verb 'to afflict.' It means to prostrate as to mind or feeling, and is never used in a concrete sense. If one man should meet another in anger and *knock him down*, we should not call that *afflicting* him; and yet this is the sense in which the word is employed in the passage referred to. In the same poet we meet with 'horrent' (for bristling) arms; 'savage' (for woody) hill; and 'amiable' (for lovely) fruit, &c. Thomson, in his poem of 'Winter,' has, in like manner, 'With dangling ice all *horrid*'—the last word, in the sense of rough or bristling. Modern usage does not sanction this application of such words in ordinary discourse or writing.

## CHAPTER VII.

## GRAND WORDS.

THE almost universal mania for violent excitement and craving after novelty, which is so marked a feature of modern society, is, perhaps, in no instance more offensively obtrusive than in the style of most of our present periodical writers. It seems impossible for them to call things by their proper names. They reject all simple words, and are continually soaring above their subject into the regions of the sublime and magnificent. As long as a word is out-of-the-way, unusual, or far-fetched, it is apparently of little or no consequence to them whether it be applicable to the case or not. The commonest and most familiar objects are thus raised to a dignity quite out of keeping with their real nature; and here, if anywhere, is verified the saying that 'from the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step.' Everything is sacrificed to a false glare and glitter of language, and sense is always made

subservient to sound. Those beautiful English words 'boys' and 'girls' are almost banished from our modern vocabulary. 'Boys' and 'girls' are transformed into 'juveniles;' 'workmen' have become 'operatives;' and 'people' in general are now 'individuals.' These 'individuals,' be it observed, are never 'dressed,' but always 'attired' or 'arrayed;' they are never 'angry,' but often 'irate;' they never 'go into a shop,' though they sometimes condescend to 'enter an emporium,' or perhaps a 'depôt;' and when they return home, they never 'take off their things,' but 'divest themselves of their habiliments.' Another practice with these writers is to substitute for single terms milk-and-water definitions of them. With them, a 'fire' is always 'the devouring element;' a 'man' is 'an individual of the masculine gender;' a 'footman' is a 'superb menial;' and a 'schoolmaster' is the 'principal of a collegiate institution.'

This style originated in the penny-a-line system. It abounds in our second and third-rate magazines, and, with some few honourable exceptions, has infected all the periodical and light literature of the day. The word 'individual' has the merit of possessing five syllables; whereas 'man,' or 'person,' has but one or two, and for this reason alone is rejected for the other word. But if Dean Swift's definition of a good style—'Proper words

in their proper places'—is to have any weight as an authority, it is certainly here not carried into practice. These high-flown terms are very well in their proper places, but they are not adapted to the cases to which they are applied, and therefore they are neither proper words nor in their proper places. The worst of this practice is, that it deprives all the sound sterling part of the English language of its peculiar force and significance. Words that are seldom used will at length inevitably disappear, and thus, if not checked in time, this extravagance of expression will do an irreparable injury to the English language.

Another habit of these periodical writers is to sacrifice the idiom of the language to their love for some particular word. Two verbs, of which they seem especially fond, are, 'to commence' and 'to essay.' These are French words, and are always preferred before their corresponding Saxon synonyms, 'to begin' and 'to try.' But in their liking for them, these writers are often betrayed into an incorrect phraseology. To 'begin' may be followed by an infinitive or a gerund. We may say, 'he began to read,' or 'he began reading.' Not so may the verbs 'to commence' and 'to essay' be used. These do not, correctly, take an infinitive as an object. We cannot say, properly, '*he commenced to read,*' or '*he essayed to do well.*' In such

cases we must use 'begin' and 'try.' But the latter are not sufficiently elevated to suit the views of the penny-a-liners, and are therefore rejected.

Another of these grand words is 'intoxicated.' In the newspapers, for once that we read of a man being drunk, we find at least nine or ten times that he is intoxicated. The word 'drunk' is unfortunately too often required in our police reports; but the reporters are either too squeamish, or too much inclined to the long word, to hesitate in their choice. 'Intoxicated' has five syllables; 'drunk' has but one: so that the odds in favour of the former are literally as five to one. But even then they are not satisfied: they add to it '*with drink,*' thus putting two more syllables to the phrase. We generally read that 'the prisoner was intoxicated with drink.' This form of expression must occupy at least a line of the printed matter, and is therefore worth to the writer—exactly one penny!

The use of the verb 'replace,' as frequently seen in the writings of the periodical press, is open to objection. When anyone (we will suppose) quits his office, they write that he was 'replaced' by another, meaning that some one else filled his place. But the verb 'to replace' has not, correctly, this meaning. It signifies 'to put back in its place.' If I take a book from the library shelf, and, after

reading it, put it back again, I *replace* it; but I cannot properly say that one man 'replaced' another in his office, if I mean that he took his place. There seems to be here a confusion between the two French verbs, 'remplacer' and 'replacer.' The first means 'to put *in* the place of another,' i.e. to furnish a substitute; and the second is, 'to put back in its own place.'

Another common fault is the use of the word 'abstractedly' for 'abstractly.' A man speaks 'abstractedly' when his mind is drawn away from the subject before him; here, his manner is abstracted. But a man speaks 'abstractly' when he treats of the ideal and not the real—the abstract, and not the concrete. Here his subject is abstract. Again: 'to choose,' or 'to decide,' is much too common a term to suit the taste of these modern article-writers. According to them, people never 'choose:' they always *elect*. We continually read, for example, that some one 'elected' to go abroad, rather than that he decided or determined on taking that step.

Three words of suspicious length and somewhat mysterious meaning have been lately added to our vocabulary, viz. 'rehabilitate,' 'solidarity,' and 'desirability.' These seem to be great favourites, especially with news-writers. They talk of the '*desirability*' of '*rehabilitating*' our relations with a



certain continental State, in order to effect a 'solidarity' between the two nations !

One phase of this leaning to the grandiose style is an affectation of foreign words and phrases. The extent to which this practice is carried by some writers is extraordinary. They can scarcely call anything by its proper English name, but must apply to it some Italian or French word. Such writers describe people as '*blasés*,' or perhaps as having '*un air distingué*;' and these people are said to do everything '*à merveille*.' Some few Italian phrases are also occasionally introduced, such as '*in petto*,' the '*dolce far niente*,' &c.; and the style of many writers learned in the ancient classics is in like manner infected with Greek and Latin words and idioms.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE SPELLING OF WORDS.

SINCE, before the invention of printing, there was no standard of English spelling, our orthography can have no history before that epoch. The variety of forms in which words appeared was endless ; for not only did different writers spell them differently, but one writer would often present his readers with several forms of the same word even in the same page. During the whole of our early history, then, the language can hardly be said to have had any fixed laws of spelling.

The orthography of Anglo-Saxon itself seems to have been very unsettled. Few words appeared invariably in the same form, and some had as many as three or four different modes of spelling. We find 'ác' and 'æc' (oak) ; 'lang' and 'long' (long) ; 'geaf' and 'gef' (give) ; 'seolf,' 'self,' and 'sylf' (self) ; 'sweaster' and 'swuster' (sister) ; 'heauwod' and 'heafod' (head), &c. &c.

The accent also made a difference in both the pronunciation and meaning of some words. Thus, 'ís' meant ice, but 'is' (without the accent) was the 3rd singular present of the verb 'to be.' 'God,' in Anglo-Saxon, was, in spelling and meaning, our word 'God;' but 'gód' (pronounced 'gōād') was our adjective 'good,' &c.

The marked difference in form between the Saxon and the early English was the substitution of *e* for the Saxon endings *a*, *e*, and *u*. Thus, 'nama,' 'ende,' and 'wudu' appeared in early English as name*e*, ende*e*, and woode (probably pronounced as two syllables). At a still later period there was a tendency to get rid not only of this *e*, but of the whole system of Anglo-Saxon inflections; and the nouns, adjectives, and verbs were stripped of nearly all their endings.

The only two inflections of the noun which survived this decay, and which may be traced to the present time, were the *es* of the possessive (or genitive) singular, and the *as* of the subjective (or nominative) plural. The Saxon for 'of a smith' was 'smides,' and the nominative plural of the same word was 'smidas.' Wiclif often uses '*is*' as a plural ending, as in 'housis,' 'barelis,' &c. Caxton writes 'thynges,' and More, tythes, arrowes, &c. Now the usual ending is *s*; as in 'books,' trees, &c.

All the inflections of the adjectives also fell off; and instead of 'godne' (acc. sing.), 'godes' (gen. sing.), 'godum,' 'godre' (dat. pl.) these endings disappeared, and the word was reduced in all its cases and genders, and in both numbers, to 'gód' (good), as we now have it.

The verb lost its gerund, or rather the latter was confounded with the participle in *ing*; so that 'writtane' (for the purpose of writing) was used indiscriminately with 'writende' (writing); and many other terminations, though they did not wholly disappear, were weakened by the substitution of *e* for *a*, or *en* for *an*, as 'bærnen' for 'bærnan.' Afterwards the participle ending was changed from *ende* to *and*, thence to *inge*, and at last to *ing*, as we now have it. Thus:—'writende,' 'writand,' 'wringe,' 'writing.'

Between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there was a constant and increasing tendency to throw off the final *e*. Chaucer, Wiclif, and other writers of the fourteenth century, have numbers of words written with that ending, where it is now omitted, as 'childe,' 'herte,' 'fynde,' &c. But, in taking away this final, it became necessary, in some cases, to make another change in the spelling, in order to prevent a mispronunciation. The earlier form 'mete,' being deprived of its final *e*, would leave 'met.' Therefore, to preserve the long sound,

the *e* medial was doubled, and the word stood '*meet*.' The same principle operated in transforming 'cloke' into 'cloak,' 'yere' into 'year,' 'scole' into 'school,' 'grete' into 'great,' &c. The *e* final being taken away, it was necessary, in order to preserve the pronunciation, to lengthen the internal vowel.

The art of printing exercised a very powerful influence over English orthography. The first printers assumed at once an absolute power, not only in the matter of spelling and punctuation, but even in cases of expression and grammatical forms. The result was far from favourable to uniformity; for, as every printer had his own views on the subject, each consequently differed from the others, and this entailed endless confusion. The author's punctuation and spelling were then always sacrificed to the printer's convenience. If the writer used any words of doubtful or unsettled orthography, of which there was then a very large number, the printer assumed it as his right to add to, or take from them as many letters as he thought proper, to suit the length of the line. Many blunders also arose from the ignorance of the copyists. The various manuscripts of one poem sometimes differ so widely from each other, that modern scholars have supposed these varieties to have been the result of the author's own revi-

sion. But the more probable cause of these differences is that the manuscript was copied by a number of different hands, and that consequently each differed from the other according to the views of such matters which each copyist had adopted.

We may safely conclude that in orthography, as in other matters, changes will take place. The phonographers say that, as the whole object of writing is to represent on paper the sounds of the human voice, every word should be spelled exactly as it is pronounced. But there are grave objections to this view. First, pronunciation itself is in a state of transition—as the present differs from the past, so will the future differ from the present—and therefore the spelling would have to be changed as often as the words were differently pronounced. Secondly, there are so many, and such delicate shades of sound in the human voice, that, to carry out this design properly, it would be necessary to invent innumerable characters to represent them. The remedy, then, would be worse than the disease, for the multitude of new and strange characters which this system would require would be far more puzzling to a learner than any of the existing difficulties.

On the other hand, the conservative party maintain that the proposed changes in spelling should not be admitted because they would obscure, if

not destroy, the derivation of words. This argument has certainly considerable force. In the study of English, a knowledge of derivation is quite as important as correctness of spelling. Surely the one should not be wholly sacrificed to the other. Are we to lose the essence of the word for the mere sake of its outward appearance? It would certainly be a great gain to simplify our forms of spelling; but if, in so doing, we destroyed the etymology of the language, would our gain or our loss be the greater? The present forms of spelling are, in many cases, a key to the derivation of the word. How did the *b* get into 'doubt' and 'debt,' or the *g* into 'feign' and 'impugn?' These letters are left in the words expressly to show us their origin. When first introduced into English, 'debt' and 'doubt' were both written and pronounced as in French ('dette' and 'doute'). But when it afterwards became known that they were originally derived from the Latin verbs 'debē-re' and 'dubitare,' the *b* was restored in the spelling.

Some argue that the influence of derivation on spelling is only partial, and that other and more powerful causes are operating changes in the forms of words. It is readily admitted that the language will, *in time*, yield to this pressure. But we must not precipitate matters; and there is something to be said on the other side of the



question. The study of English has lately received a great impulse, and increased attention has been paid to its nature and origin. It is surely somewhat inconsistent to recommend this increased energy of study, and, at the same time, to throw obstacles in the student's way ! It is remarkable how long it takes to work a change of this sort. The writer can remember the controversy about the substitution of the final *or* for *our* for more than forty years back ; and yet in that time very little progress has been made in the proposed reform. But there are obviously certain tendencies in the English language towards a new orthography, and we may point out with tolerable certainty what changes will be eventually effected.

The law of contraction is in constant operation in the spelling of words. It is this principle that has caused us to reject the final *k* in words of two or more syllables. *K* final is now confined chiefly to monosyllables. We retain it in 'back,' 'peck,' 'stick,' 'rock,' 'duck,' &c. Formerly 'music,' 'critic,' 'traffic,' &c. retained the *k* ; now it has disappeared from these words. But it is evidently very loth to go ; for it still holds its place in 'attack,' 'ransack,' 'bullock,' 'hillock,' &c., as well as in compound words, as 'shipwreck,' 'weathercock,' 'wedlock,' &c. It is possible that, at some future time, we shall be writing 'bac,'



'pec,' 'stic,' 'roc,' and 'luc;' but for the present we must, in these cases, add the *k*.

The same contracting tendency affects the forms of certain past tenses of verbs. We write 'sent' for 'sended,' 'built' for 'builded,' &c. Some would extend this contraction to all verbs ending in close consonants, as *p*, *ck*, *f*, or *s*. They would have us write 'slapt,' 'drest,' 'hisst,' 'hopt,' and 'snufft.' There is, no doubt, a leaning this way in the language. The verbs 'creep,' 'feel,' 'sleep,' &c. make, in the past tense, 'crept,' 'felt,' 'slept,' &c. But it will be some time before such forms as quafft, peept, pickt, hopt, and supt are generally adopted.

This contracting principle also originated the tendency to omit the *u* in the termination *our*. Most of the words which have this ending come to us from Latin through French, where the ending is *eur*, as seen in 'honneur,' 'vigueur,' 'valeur,' &c. American writers leave out the *u* in all these cases. They write 'endeavor,' 'neighbor,' behavior, &c. There is, no doubt, a tendency to omit the *u* in such words. It may be observed that most of the words which have lost this *u* are names of agents, as 'actor,' 'author,' 'creator,' 'doctor,' 'governor,' 'orator,' 'sailor,' 'tailor,' and 'warrior;' whereas comparatively few abstract nouns have rejected it, though it no longer

appears in 'error,' 'horror,' 'stupor,' 'terror,' and 'torpor.'

Another pair of endings—*ise* and *ize*—has given rise to a divided practice in spelling. The leaning here is decidedly towards *ise*. The words *temperise*, *advertise*, *authorise*, &c. were all formerly written with a *z*. Strictly speaking, *ize* should be used in those verbs of this class which can be traced directly to a Greek source, as 'baptize,' 'idolize,' 'agonize;' especially those used in a scientific sense, as *catechize*, *symbolize*, *epitomize*, &c. But many such words come to us through a French medium, as 'criticise,' 'realise,' 'civilise.' These should be spelled *ise*. In all probability, we shall some day reject the *z* altogether. The letter *s* seems to be taking its place in these and many other cases, as in 'artisan,' 'partisan,' &c. The late Dr. Donaldson was of opinion that all the above verbs should be spelled *ise*.

By the same law of contraction it is proposed to give up the diphthongs *ae* and *oe*, found in many English words derived from Greek and Latin, and to spell them all with a simple *e*. Many of this class have already adopted the change, for we now write 'Egypt,' 'economy,' 'federal,' 'enigma,' 'phenomenon,' 'penal,' &c. But it is reasonable to expect that many of them will retain the diphthong for some time. Proper names and scientific

terms are likely to keep it longer, whilst in more familiar words it will, probably, give place to the single vowel. Accordingly we may predict that the diphthong will remain in 'Æsop,' *Ædipus*,' 'Ætna,' 'Æta,' and 'Cæsar,' as well as in 'archæology,' 'anapæst,' 'æsthetic,' *cyclopædia*,' and 'homæopathy;' while from such words as 'economy,' 'pretor,' 'primeval,' 'equal,' 'edile,' 'edifice,' &c., if not already gone, it will soon disappear altogether. There is here an economical tendency in favour of the single *e*, and the longer these words remain in the language, the more likely are they to be spelled with the single vowel.

In many English words there has been a sort of rivalry between the letters *y* and *i*, and the general tendency now is in favour of *i*. This does not seem to be a question of contraction. It is supposed to have arisen from a dislike of the printers to the ugly appearance of *y* in the middle of a word. Mandeville writes 'lytil' (little), 'wyse' (wise), 'tymes' (times); and Wiclif has 'withynne' (within), 'receyve' (receive), 'wryte' (write), 'fayle' (fail), 'everlastyne' (everlasting), &c. In certain Greek words, however, the *y* still holds its place, as in 'hymn,' 'type,' 'hydra,' 'tyrant,' 'lyre,' &c. These will probably long remain in the spelling.

One innovation proposed by the phonographers

was to substitute a *k* for the ending *que*. All our words of this class are from the French, where the ending is invariably *que*. Many of these have already conformed to the English tendency, and are written with a *k* final, as ‘mask,’ ‘cask,’ ‘brisk,’ ‘risk,’ &c. These are monosyllables. But we hesitate to extend this practice to words of two or three syllables. We are not prepared to adopt such forms as ‘picturesk,’ ‘grotesk,’ ‘burlesk,’ &c. Nor is it likely that we shall be easily reconciled to ‘opaque,’ ‘antike,’ ‘oblike,’ &c. In some few cases, if only to mark a difference of meaning, it is expedient to have two forms of spelling; for instance, between *bark* (of a tree) and *barque* (a vessel), *check* (a restraint) and *cheque* (on a banker), *pike* (a weapon) and *pique* (a petty quarrel), *mark* (a note or sign) and *marque* (a reprisal) as in ‘letters of marque.’

We ought not to conclude, because changes of spelling have been adopted in certain words, that similar changes should be applied to all the words of that class—because, for instance, the old forms ‘advauce,’ ‘commaund,’ ‘chaunt,’ and others now appear as ‘advance,’ ‘command,’ ‘chant,’ we should, for this reason, write ‘tant,’ ‘hant,’ ‘dant,’ and ‘lanch’ instead of ‘taunt,’ ‘haunt,’ ‘daunt,’ and ‘launch.’ But nature and habit are not to be trifled with. Both experience and

reason combat all sudden changes. If they are to be, they will come in good time ; meanwhile let us watch and follow.

Again, the reformers of our spelling would have us cut off the ending *ue* from such words as ‘catalogue,’ ‘demagogue,’ ‘synagogue,’ ‘colleague,’ ‘harangue,’ ‘tongue,’ &c., and spell them ‘catalog,’ ‘demagog,’ &c. It may be most confidently predicted that, whatever may happen in the course of future ages, this change will not take place either in this or the next generation.

Another proposed change is to invert the ending *re*, and write it *er*, as being more in accordance with English pronunciation. That this is the tendency of the language is not to be denied, for it is well known that many English words now ending in *er* were formerly written *re*. Such are the Norman names of the months—‘*Septembre*,’ ‘*Octobre*,’ ‘*Novembre*,’ ‘*Décembre*,’ &c. Some of this class have not yet adopted the change, and still appear in their French forms, as ‘*accoutre*,’ ‘*centre*,’ ‘*fibre*,’ ‘*lustre*,’ ‘*nitre*,’ ‘*ochre*,’ &c. But it is to be noticed that these are not common words—not words of the homestead or market-place—and that therefore they are much more likely to retain their old forms. In some of them, also, it is desirable to have two modes of spelling. We have ‘*meter*’ in the sense of a measurer, as in ‘*barometer*,’



'thermometer,' &c., and 'metre' in versification. 'Center' appears as a verb, and 'centre' as a noun. That most of this class will, in time, be spelled with the ending *er* is highly probable, but the above remark may account for their not having yet adopted that termination.

It has often been objected to our language that its study, as regards pronunciation and spelling, is more difficult than that of any of the continental languages. Foreigners endeavouring to master these difficulties are often quite overwhelmed by them, and not unfrequently give up the study in despair. But no language is without difficulties of this sort. Indeed, the difference between written and spoken French offers quite as formidable obstacles to the speller in French as could happen in English. The French words '*ver*' (from '*vermis*,' a worm), '*vert*' (from '*viridis*,' green), and '*verre*' (from '*vitrum*,' glass) are all pronounced exactly alike, and it is only by a knowledge of their derivation that one can account for the difference of their forms. Again, *mère* (from *mater*, a mother), *mer* (from *mare*, the sea), and *maire* (from *major*, greater) differ in spelling, though not in sound, because of their different derivations. If all these words had the same form of spelling because they have the same pronunciation, no one could trace them to their source or

account for their meaning. We may, then, conclude that the proper spelling of a word depends mainly on its etymology, and that the reason why bad spelling is looked upon with such disfavour is, that it argues ignorance of derivation.

In all probability, if the project of instituting an English Academy for the regulation of our language were carried out, there would immediately arise innumerable protests against its decisions. It is well known that the literary decrees of the French Academy are not generally accepted or adopted, and that the opinions of some of the most eminent literati in France are directly against its conclusions. Besides, the spirit of the English people is so strongly opposed to dictation, in this as in other matters, that such an institution would stand no chance of success in this country.

It is too much the fashion now-a-days to find fault with English orthography, and it is also too much the fashion to acquiesce in its general condemnation. But, in truth, it is only those who have paid no attention to our language, as a scientific study, who can fail to recognise the causes of these objections. The three principal elements of English—viz. Saxon, French, and Latin—have, each, and all, had some influence on the formation of our words; and this will account for the various forms of our spelling. A word,



when introduced into a language, is at first spelled in accordance with the genius of the nation from which it comes. By degrees, and generally by slow degrees, it is moulded into a new form by the genius and instinct of the language in which it is at length naturalised ; still, however, retaining sufficient of its original form to indicate its source and etymology. Various causes contribute to effect this change ; a difference in pronunciation ; the influence of some local dialect, political, religious, or literary disputes, the example of popular writers, &c. &c. may all assist in working a change in the outward forms of words.

But a study of the subject will prove that this operation must be the work of time, and that no assumed power can, of itself, work a sudden change in spelling. This alone is sufficient to account for the failure of the phonographic system. It may also be laid down for certain, that any newly-proposed form of spelling which obscures or destroys the derivation of a word stands but little chance of success. The general body of writers knew full well that if they had at once adopted phonetic spelling, it would have inevitably involved the language in confusion and ruin by the destruction of its etymology, and would have thus effaced every vestige of its beauty and variety.

## CHAPTER IX.

## FLEXIBILITY, VARIETY, ETC. OF WORDS.

THE history of English shows that it has been changed from a synthetical, to an analytical language, that in the course of time it has lost nearly all its inflections; and that for these endings have been substituted signs and prepositions. Whether this change has been for the better, or for the worse, may be a matter for speculation; but allowing that, in some respects, the language may have sustained a loss by this process, it is not difficult to show that for this we have some compensating advantages—and that the change has been favourable in at least two points: 1st. as regards variety of sound in the endings of words: and 2. flexibility in their use and application.

In Latin, the recurrence of the verb in the same person naturally produced a repetition of the same termination, which must have had a very disagreeable and monotonous effect. In Cicero's second oration 'in Catilinam,' he has '*Abiit, excessit,*

*erupit, evasit.*' Four consecutive words ending in *it*! Another example of monotonous repetition, quoted by Cicero in his '*De Naturâ Deorum*' is, '*clamo, postulo, obsecro, oro, ploro, atque imploro fidem.*' Cæsar's often-quoted letter, '*Veni, vidi, vici*' is open to the same objection, as well as the '*tædet harum quotidianarum formarum,*' of Terence. In all these cases, the repetition of the endings must have produced a most harsh and disagreeable effect; and if these passages were translated into English, we should probably find that every word had a different termination.

But the flexibility of our language, which arises partly from the same cause, is another, and perhaps more important consideration. We can easily understand that the system of inflection, however useful in itself, prevents the possibility of one part of speech being used for another. In English, 'love' may be a noun or a verb; but in Latin or French, we must use '*amare*' or '*aimer*' for the verb, and '*amor*' or '*amour*' for the noun. This power of using one part of speech for another, exists to such an extent in English, that it may be almost said, that every word in the language may be applied in a variety of senses and grammatical constructions. That this is of incalculable advantage, every thoughtful English scholar will surely allow; and it may be observed that not one of the

modern languages of Europe possesses this elastic power in the same degree as English. This may be seen in the following cases :—

1st. Almost all our verbs in common use may be used as nouns. We have ‘to walk,’ or to take ‘a walk;’ ‘to ride,’ or to enjoy ‘a ride;’ ‘to talk,’ or to have ‘a talk;’ to offer,’ or to make ‘an offer;’ ‘to visit,’ or, to pay ‘a visit,’ &c.

2. Nouns may be used as verbs:—We may say ‘a telegraph;’ or ‘to telegraph’ a message; ‘butter,’ or ‘to butter’ bread: ‘sugar;’ or ‘to sugar’ tea; ‘a quarter,’ or ‘to quarter’ a regiment, &c.

3. Adjectives are used as nouns :—We may say ‘a round table,’ or, ‘a round’ of visits: a ‘green’ tree, or to play on ‘the green;’ a ‘beautiful’ prospect, or a love for ‘the beautiful.’ And not only can we use the adjective as a noun; we may even give it a plural form. We often speak of ‘eatables and drinkables.’ A man may have a fit of the ‘dismals,’ or the ‘blues;’ or he may be anxious about his ‘goods,’ ‘moveables,’ or ‘valuables,’ &c.

4. Adjectives are frequently used as verbs :—as, a ‘clear’ way; or to ‘clear’ the way; a ‘long’ distance, or to ‘long’ for something; a ‘still’ evening, or to ‘still’ the waves, &c.

5. Comparative adjectives are occasionally used as verbs; as ‘a better’ condition, or, ‘to better’ our condition; a ‘lower’ state, or to ‘lower’ a

rope ; ‘ further ’ remarks, or ‘ to further ’ a design ; ‘ utter ’ nonsense, or ‘ to utter ’ opinions, &c.

6. Personal pronouns may be used as nouns : as, ‘ A downright *she*. ’—(Byron.) ‘ Left to be finished by such a *she*. ’—(Shakspeare.)

7. Conjunctions are frequently used as nouns ; as, ‘ But me no *buts*. ’ How many ‘ *thats* ’ are there in the sentence ? ‘ Let us have no more *ifs* and *ands*, ’ &c.

8. Prepositions may be used in like manner : as, The *ins* and *outs* of life. The ‘ *ups* and *downs* ’ of fortune, &c.

9. Even adverbs are sometimes constructed as nouns ; as :—Which are in the majority ; the ‘ *ayes*, ’ or the ‘ *noes* ? ’

This extraordinary plasticity of English applies particularly to nouns signifying parts of the body. There is scarcely one of these which may not be turned into a verb. For example, we commonly hear that a man ‘ *faces* ’ his difficulties with courage. Hamlet says of Polonius, ‘ You may *nose* him in the lobby. ’ In Shakspeare’s ‘ Tempest ’ we may read, ‘ Full many a lady I have *eyed* with best regard. ’

To *jaw* is sometimes used, though not very elegantly, in the sense of to chatter or scold. We often hear of a man ‘ *elbowing* ’ his way through a crowd, and Goldsmith’s ‘ Deserted Village ’ gives

us '*Shouldered* his arms, and showed how fields were won.'

To '*hand*' a plate, and to '*finger*' a passage on the piano, are everyday expressions. We also frequently hear of a coachman '*backing*' his horses, and Shakspeare has '*to foot it featly*.' Besides these, may be noticed '*to thumb* the leaves of a book : to '*breast* the waves,' '*to palm off* (for to cheat or deceive);' to '*side* with a party; and to '*head* an expedition. To these may be added '*to bone*' a fowl; '*to skin*' a rabbit, and many others. It may be reasonably doubted whether this power exists to anything like the same extent in the continental languages.

But not only the names of parts of the body; also those of many articles of domestic use are employed in a similar way. We have to '*chair* a member; we hear that people are '*boarded*, and that the earth is '*carpeted* with green. '*Curtained*' sleep, and '*imbedded*' in the earth, belong to the same class. One man is said to '*floor* another in argument. To '*picture* to yourself;' to '*table* the contents of a book; to be '*closeted* with a friend, to '*book* a debt; to '*pen* a letter; to '*ink* a dress; to '*paper* a room, and to '*shelve* a subject are all common and daily expressions. They are, in every sense of the term, *household* words.

In English, names of domestic animals are all



Saxon; whereas wild beasts for the most part retain their Latin or French names. Thus 'cat,' 'hound,' 'horse,' 'sheep,' 'cow,' 'swine,' &c., are of Germanic origin; whilst 'lion,' 'tiger,' 'elephant,' 'leopard,' 'panther,' &c., come to us from Greek through Latin. The power we have to use these names of animals as verbs is another instance of the elasticity of our language. This can be done with some of the above Saxon names, though not with those of wild beasts. The noun 'horse' is often used as a verb: a stable-keeper is said to *horse* a coach; i.e. to supply it with horses. We have also to *dodge*; i.e. to follow a scent in and out like a dog. A man is *hounded* on to do such and such work; while to *rat* is to desert your party. Every one knows that to *duck* is to dive in the water like a duck. People are also said to be *gulled* when they are easily deceived; and to *drone* when they read or speak monotonously.

It is remarkable how often, colloquially, we use the names of animals as types of temper or character. True, this is not peculiar to the English language: though the practice is perhaps here more extended. People continually employ the word 'ass' or 'donkey' in the sense of a stupid loutish fellow. They also often stigmatise a cunning man as a 'fox;' or a scolding shrew as a 'vixen.' A proud little strut is called 'a cock of the walk;' and a

reckless spendrift is a 'sad dog;' or sometimes a 'jolly dog.' 'Puppy' is suggestive of conceit and self-sufficiency; and a slothful, indolent man is spoken of as a lazy 'hound.' A 'hog' is sometimes used as a metaphor for a glutton; and a 'pig' for a dirty fellow. 'Pig-headed' is also applied to one of stubborn temper; a 'mule' is a type of obstinacy; and a 'horse,' in the sense of a beast of burden, is found in 'towel-horse,' or 'clothes-horse.' Men of rude manners are spoken of as 'bears,' and the weak or timid in disposition are called 'chicken'-hearted. A fond mother speaks of her child as her pet 'lamb,' or little 'duck.' Silliness is typified by 'goose,' and mischief by 'monkey,' &c. Here it will be found that these words are, with one or two exceptions, used in a disparaging, and not in a favourable, sense. They are, most of them, terms of reproach, not of praise.

Words have not only degenerated in sense; their outward form has also suffered. One principle—contraction—has affected both the pronunciation and spelling of many words. It may be taken as a general rule that words, as they grow older, become softer and shorter. They seldom expand, but almost always contract. This probably originated in a loose careless way of speaking, which afterwards affected the written language.

Contractions appear in a great variety of forms. 1st. They are made by cutting off an initial syllable, as ‘prentice,’ for ‘apprentice;’ ‘peach,’ for ‘impeach;’ ‘gin,’ for ‘engine;’ ‘suage,’ for ‘assuage;’ ‘cyclopædia,’ for ‘encyclopædia;’ &c. Among the words which have lost their initial letters, three are to be especially noticed: viz. ‘luck,’ ‘irksome,’ and ‘orchard.’ The first of these was originally ‘Glück,’ and is still so spelled in German, whence it comes. ‘Irksome’ was in Anglo-Saxon written ‘(w)eorcsam,’ i.e. full of work, and therefore troublesome; and ‘orchard’ is a corruption of ‘(w)ort-yard,’ that is, a yard in which (worts) plants or vegetables were grown. 2nd. By cutting off a final syllable; as in ‘pro and con,’ for ‘contra;’ ‘cit,’ for ‘citizen;’ ‘without,’ formerly ‘withouten;’ ‘incog,’ for ‘incognito;’ ‘hyp,’ for ‘hypochondria;’ ‘consols,’ for ‘consolidated annuities,’ &c. 3rd. By taking a letter, or letters, from the middle of a word; as ‘else,’ for ‘elles;’ ‘lark,’ for ‘laverock;’ ‘last,’ for ‘latest;’ ‘lord,’ for ‘hlaford;’ ‘since,’ for ‘sithence;’ ‘parrot,’ for ‘perroquet;’ and ‘fortnight,’ for ‘fourteen nights;’ ‘cheer up’ is contracted into ‘chirrup,’ and then into ‘chirp;’ ‘speak’ comes from ‘sprecan;’ and the Anglo-Saxon ‘wifman’ appears as ‘woman.’ By the same law are formed many proper names. ‘Twell,’

for 'at the well;' 'Thill,' for 'at the hill;' 'Oxford,' for 'Oxenford;' 'Cambridge,' for 'Cantebrigge,' &c.

Many other cases may be cited as examples of this law. The word '(E)piscop(us)' has suffered a mutilation at both the beginning and the end; and appears in English as 'Bishop.' The prefix 'ge,' commonly used in Saxon, and still retained in German participles, lingered for some time in English in the softened form of *y*; as in 'yclept,' 'yclothed,' &c.; but it has now vanished from the language. Another instance of the same tendency may be seen in the present pronunciation of participles ending in 'ed.' Formerly, the word 'used' was always pronounced as a dissyllable—'usèd'; now it is universally pronounced as a monosyllable. Indeed, this final 'ed,' as a distinct syllable though still occasionally heard in the pulpit, is fast disappearing from our language.

Contraction was the main principle on which the ancient Latin was transformed into French. It is curious to observe that though this contracting power did operate in Italian, it was not there carried out to the same degree as in French; that is, though Italian words are, in most cases, shorter than their Latin equivalents, they are not so contracted as the French words of the same meaning. This may be easily shown by comparison:—

<i>Latin.</i>	<i>Italian.</i>	<i>French.</i>
apotheca . . . .	bottega . . .	boutique
male-aptus . . .	malatto . . .	malade
quisque unus . . .	ciascuno . . .	chacun
ad hanc horam . . .	ancora . . .	encore
ad illam horam . . .	allora . . .	alors
ad satis . . . .	assai . . .	assez
in simul . . . .	insieme . . .	ensemble
semetipsissimus . . .	medesimo . . .	même
de retro . . . .	dietro . . .	derrière
de illo . . . .	dello . . .	du
homo . . . .	uomo . . .	on
gaudium . . . .	giojo . . .	joie

and many others.

### *Expansion.*

On the other hand, there are some few cases where words are expanded or widened by the insertion of a letter. 1st. Of a vowel. We have ‘alarum,’ for ‘alarm;’ ‘lawyer,’ for ‘lawer;’ ‘clothier,’ for ‘clother.’ The *i* is also inserted in ‘parliament,’ ‘Saviour,’ ‘handicraft,’ ‘handiwork,’ ‘periwinkle,’ and a few others.

2nd. Sometimes, *l* or *r* is inserted; as in ‘principle,’ from ‘principe;’ ‘syllable,’ from ‘syllabe;’ ‘cartridge,’ from ‘cartouche;’ ‘partridge,’ from the Latin ‘perdix,’ through the French ‘perdrix;’ ‘groom,’ from the Anglo-Saxon ‘guma,’ a man; ‘vagrant,’ from ‘vagans;’ and ‘corporal,’ from ‘caporal.’

3rd. P and B are often inserted after *m*; as

'empty,' Anglo-Saxon 'æmtig;' 'tempt,' from the French 'tenter;' 'embers,' from the Anglo-Saxon 'æmyrje;' 'nimble,' from the Anglo-Saxon 'nemol.' Also in 'lamb,' 'limb,' 'crumb,' 'thumb,' and 'numb,' the *b* forms no part of the root.

4th. *D* naturally attaches itself to *n* final; as in 'sound,' 'riband,' 'lend,' &c. This may probably account for certain provincial pronunciations, as 'gownd,' 'drownd,' &c. Also in 'thunder,' 'kindred,' and 'yonder,' the *d* is parasitical.

### *Assimilation.*

Assimilation, or the coming together of letters which have an affinity for each other, is a principle which affects the spelling, as well as the pronunciation, of many English words. This law softens the pronunciation, and will account for the frequent occurrence of a double consonant at the beginning of a large class of words. The rule is here:—'*When a prefix ending in a consonant is applied to a root beginning with one, that consonant disappears, and there is substituted for it the initial consonant of the root.*' This happens most frequently in English words compounded with Latin prepositions. The *d* in the preposition '*ad*' is often assimilated to the initial consonant of the root to which it is applied.

The word 'accede' is made up of 'ad' (to) and



'cede' (come). But the initial *c* in 'cede' assimilated to itself the *d* in 'ad,' i.e. changed it into a *c*. Thus 'adcede' became 'accede.' This law will account for the double consonant in such forms; as 'accost,' 'aggrieve,' 'allude,' 'ammunition,' 'annex,' 'apply,' 'assist,' 'attract,' and many others. In all these cases the first syllable was originally 'ad.'

This law applies with equal force to other Latin prepositions which enter into the formation of English words; as 'con,' 'in,' 'per,' 'sub,' &c. We spell the word 'collect' for 'conlect;' 'commune,' for 'conmmune,' &c. On the same principle we write 'illegal,' for 'inlegal;' 'irregular,' for 'inregular;' 'pellucid,' for 'perlucid;' 'succumb,' for 'subcumb;' and many others. But when the root begins with a labial (*b*, *p*, or *m*), then the final consonant of the preposition is always changed into *m*. This is why we write 'imbibe,' and not 'ibbibe;' 'imbue,' not 'ibbue;' and 'impossible,' not 'ipposible,' &c.

This principle of assimilation has operated in the formation of the words 'hammock' and 'stirrup.' The first is from 'hang-mat,' where the *ng* has been assimilated to *m*. The second is from the Anglo-Saxon 'stig-rope' (literally, 'mount-rope,' or rope to mount by), where *r* is substituted for the *g* in 'stig.'

*Attraction.*

Attraction is another principle which affects the forms of certain words. Sometimes a consonant is drawn away from the word to which it properly belongs, and becomes a part of its neighbour. The effect of this law is especially remarkable in the article '*an*.' In certain cases the *n* (of *an*) does not really belong to the article, but is the initial letter of the noun following. This happens in the case of 'an orange;' the word 'orange' is, in Spanish, whence it is derived, 'naranja,' and we should therefore write 'a norange' rather than 'an orange.' But the article *a* has attracted to itself the initial *n* of the noun, and the result is—'an orange.' For the same reason 'an adder' should be written 'a natter,' or 'a nadder.' On the other hand, there are cases in which the *n* of the article is attracted into the following word. If the word 'apron' is from the French 'naperon' (from *nappe*, cloth), we should write 'a napron,' and not 'an apron.' Several of these cases may be pointed out. We say and write, 'a neap tide,' instead of 'an ebb tide;' 'a newt,' for 'an ewt' (or eft); and, on the other hand, 'an auger,' for 'a nauger;' 'an awl,' for 'a nawl;' and 'an umpire' for 'a nompire.' The same principle operates in certain French expressions. The province of

Southern Italy formerly known as 'Apulia,' is in French written 'La Pouille.' Here the *a* initial of 'Apulia' is attracted into the article. The expression should be 'L'Apouille,' and not 'La Pouille.' In the same way, the French call 'Anatolia' (Asia Minor), 'La Natolie;' whereas it should be written 'L'Anatolie.' It is from the Greek *ἀνατολή*—the rising of the sun.

### *Accent.*

The accent of an English word depends chiefly on its derivation. In words of Saxon origin, it is placed on the root. For example, 'lóve' is an accented monosyllable, and preserves its accent on the root, in all its derivations; as in 'lóving,' 'lóveliness,' 'lóveable,' &c. But in Romance words, the tendency is to put the accent on the branches, and not on the root. In French, the vocabulary is drawn mainly from Latin words without their inflections. The French words 'natúre,' 'fatál,' 'aimáble,' &c., have the accent on the second syllable, because they are formed from the Latin 'natúra,' 'fatális,' and 'amábilis,' without the endings. But in English all these and similar words are accented on the first syllable; and we pronounce them 'náture,' 'fátal,' 'ámiable.' In Chaucer's poetry, many French words are accented on the second or third syllable, in

accordance with the classical principle; thus, we there find 'honóur,' 'natió'n,' 'company,' &c. All these, after Chaucer's time, shifted the accent back to the first syllable, thus conforming themselves to the genius of the English language. There is, to this day, in English a conflict in the accent between the two principles, the Teutonic and the Romance; the former leaning to the root, and the latter to the branches of the word. But even in classical words, as regards accent, the Saxon genius clearly prevails. We accent the word 'órdinary' on the first syllable, which contains the pith of its meaning; whereas the French place the accent on the last—'ordináire.' It was probably the antagonism between these two principles—the Germanic tendency toward the beginning, and the Romance toward the end, of the word, which caused the accent in English to be so long unsettled. But the genius of the Saxon eventually triumphed over the French element, in accent as well as in grammatical forms, and the general rule in English pronunciation, is to put the accent on the root.

The spelling of certain English derivatives depends on the place of the accent in their roots. Now, when the last syllable of the root is accented, the final consonant must be doubled in the derivative. This accounts for the root 'rób' (with one

b), making 'robbed,' and 'robber,' (with two b's) admít (one t), making admitted (two t's), &c.

But when the accent lies on any other syllable of the root, the final consonant must remain single in the derivative, as 'límit,' 'líimited;,' 'díffer,' 'díffering;,' 'bénefit,' 'bénefited;,' &c. This rule applies only to root-endings consisting of a single vowel followed by a single consonant; for if a diphthong precede, the consonant must remain single in the derivative. We must therefore write 'joiner,' 'steaming,' 'toiling,' 'reader,' &c., with single consonants.

But there are exceptions to this general rule. One especially regards roots ending in *l*. These always double the *l* in the derivative, whether the last syllable of the root be accented or not. The verb 'to expél,' will, by the above rule, naturally make its past tense, 'expelled;,' but why should 'trável' give 'traveller,' or 'équal,' 'equalled?,' These, though universally adopted, are clearly against the principle. Two other words are also exceptions, 'worship,' and 'bias.' These make 'worshipped,' and 'biassed,' with double consonants. The Americans refuse to admit these exceptions, and they write 'traveler,' 'equaled,' 'worshipped,' and 'biased,' with single consonants. It must be admitted that they are right in principle, but the general practice in English is in these cases decidedly in favour of the double consonant.

### *Inversion.*

There appears in certain letters a peculiar tendency to get out of order—to slip into a wrong place—a restless desire for change. No letter of the alphabet is more subject to this affection than the liquid, *r*. Many French words ending in *re*, are found in English to end in *er*. The French ‘*lettre*’ is in English ‘*letter*.’ The final syllables of ‘*Septembre*,’ ‘*Octobre*,’ ‘*Novembre*’ and ‘*Décembre*,’ are inverted in English, and are written ‘*September*,’ &c. The Greek root  $\epsilon\rho\pi$  (creep) gave in Latin ‘*repĕre* ;’ whence we have ‘*reptile*,’ &c. ‘*Brunt*,’ is derived from ‘*burn*.’ The ‘*brunt*’ of a battle is where it ‘*burns*’ most fiercely. Again: a ‘*purpose*’ is what we ‘*propose*’ to do ; and ‘*to trundle*’ a hoop is to ‘*turn*’ it repeatedly. The Saxon verb ‘*urnan*,’ is the source of the English ‘*run*.’ ‘*Brimstone*’ is an inversion of ‘*burn-stone* ; and the verb to ‘*ask*,’ was in Anglo-Saxon, ‘*axian*.’ Chaucer has ‘*drit*’ for ‘*dirt* ;’ ‘*briddes*,’ for ‘*birds*,’ &c.

### *Corruption.*

When a word is warped or distorted from its original form, either by a vicious pronunciation, or by a mistaken notion of its derivation, it is said to be a corruption. Though we must accept



and adopt the usual spelling of such words, it may be useful and interesting to know what brought them into their present forms.

When a word is first pronounced in the hearing of those who do not know its meaning, its spelling naturally becomes with them, a mere imitation of the sound. It is remarkable how often these corruptions appear in the names of taverns and ships. Such words being most frequently in the mouths of the illiterate, will soon acquire a false pronunciation, which, after a time, leads to a false spelling, and hence many of their present forms. It was this rude attempt to imitate a sound that led the sailors to call their ship 'Bellerophon' the 'Billy Ruffian.' From the same cause, the sign of the 'Boulogne Mouth' was corrupted into 'Bull and Mouth;' and the 'Bacchanals' (a very appropriate name for an inn), was transformed into the 'Bag of Nails.' It is said that our soldiers in India could never be taught to pronounce properly 'Surajah Dowlah,' the name of that Bengal prince who figured in the affair of the Black Hole. They persisted in calling him 'Sir Roger Dowlas!'

Some of these corrupt forms are so firmly rooted in the language, that they must now be recognised as correct, and adopted accordingly. We are told that the word 'grocer' was originally 'grosser,'

and meant one who sold articles in the gross (*en gros*). This is probably the true explanation; but we must not, on that account, revert to the old spelling. It would be eccentric and pedantic in the extreme to write 'rightwise' for 'righteous;' 'frontispice' for 'frontispiece,' or 'shamefast' for 'shamefaced;' for though the first may have been the true and original form of these words, custom must here take precedence of derivation, and we must spell them according to the present usual practice.

## CHAPTER X.

## DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE SAME IDEA.

It is worthy of observation that all nations do not express the same idea by the same form of word, i.e. that in different languages the same idea is often represented by a word of a distinctly different root. How comes it, we may ask, that the Romance languages of Europe, viz. French, Italian, Spanish, &c. all use forms of the originally same word to express their idea of '*king*,' viz. *roi*, *re*, *rey*? These languages being off-shoots of Latin, the above words are all derived from the Latin '*rex*,' from '*rego*,' '*I rule*,' or exert physical power. Now in the Teutonic languages of Europe—Dutch, German, English, etc.—we find this idea in a very different phase: '*König*,' '*König*,' '*King*.' The root of these words may be found in '*kennen*,' '*to know*.' From this it would appear that the idea of a ruler in one class of nations was a physically strong man, who, by means of his

bodily strength, could force his subjects to do his will. The Saxon for 'king' was 'cynig,' from 'cnawan' to know, i.e. one who 'knew' better than his subjects or followers—who was superior to them in knowledge. We may, perhaps, conclude from this that the Romance nations regarded strength or physical power as the distinguishing quality of a ruler; whereas the Germanic tribes saw in their leader one who was able to guide them aright by his superior thought and judgment. The Romans looked to the hand, the Germans to the head, in this matter. Is it not likely that attention to such differences may throw some light on national characteristics?

Another example of this difference of view of the same idea may be seen in the English word 'finger,' as compared with the French 'doigt.' 'Finger' is connected with the German 'fangen,' to take hold of, and is a relation of our word 'fang,' i.e. the tooth with which certain animals *hold* their prey. In the Germanic view of the word it is the instrument with which we 'take hold.' On the other hand, the Greek δάκτυλος, from δείκνυμι, I show or point out, appeared in Latin as 'digitus;' passed into Italian as 'dito,' and into French as 'doigt.' The Romance view of the word would then be 'a pointer or indicator,' and the Teutonic a holder or catcher.

The French word 'mouchoir' will also illustrate this difference of view. This is from '(se) moucher,' to wipe (the nose). It would be considered extremely vulgar to call this article in English 'a wiper,' and yet this is literally its French meaning. The Germans have named it 'Schnupftuch,' or 'snuff-cloth,' another view of the same thing. But the corresponding English word, 'handkerchief,' presents us with a most curious anomaly. The first form of the word was 'kerchief,' which is the old French 'couvre-chef,' i.e. a covering for the head, just as 'curfew' was from 'couvre-feu'—'cover-fire.' Milton has the word 'kerchiefed' in the sense of 'with the head covered.' He speaks of Morn—

*Kerchiefed* in a comely cloud.—*Penneroso*.

Now, if to 'kerchief' we prefix 'hand,' we have a word which seems to mean a covering for the head, held in the hand—which is a manifest absurdity! But the climax of confusion is reached when we qualify this word by 'pocket.' How the covering for the *head* is to be held in the *hand*, and yet carried in the *pocket* is enough to puzzle anyone.

Another instance of this description may be seen in the word 'heaven.' In the Teutonic languages it represents the idea of something raised on high, or *heaved* up—from 'heafan' and 'heben,' to lift up, or elevate. But the Romance

view of this word is connected with the idea of hollowness or concavity. The Greek *κοῖλον*; the Latin 'coelum;' the Italian 'cielo;' and the French 'ciel'—all involve the meaning of a hollow, or arched covering.

A great variety of expression may be also seen if we compare together the idioms of several European languages. These peculiarities may be looked upon as characterising the tone and habits of thought of a nation, and they deserve especial study and attention. If we take the usual form of greeting in English—'How do you do?' here we may see that the verb *do* is indicative of the activity and practical nature of the English mind. It would seem as if in this country our bodily health actually depends upon our *doing*; i.e. our business habits; that to be occupied is equivalent to being in good health. Now if we take the ordinary corresponding French phrase—'Comment vous *portez-vous*?'—we may fairly infer that the well-being in this case depends on the *carriage*, or outward bearing of the person. The Germans, under the same circumstances, say: 'Wie befinden Sie sich?' (literally, 'how do they *find* themselves?') May not this form of expression throw some light on the German character? May it not point to that tendency to deep reflection which is known to be so strikingly distinctive of the



German tone of mind? From this we may conclude that the German is so habituated to deep thought that he cannot even tell you the state of his health, without searching till he *finds* it out. The Italian corresponding form, 'Come sta?' (literally, 'How does he stand?'), is referred to the *standing* of the Lombard merchants in the market-place; and in this case, the well-being or health seems to have depended on the prosperity of the dealer. In these remarks on the different forms of greeting, there may appear something fanciful, but one thing is clear, viz. that they all differ from each other, and it is but natural to conclude, that each has some connection with the turn of mind of the people to which it belongs. Of course it would be wrong to form positive opinions concerning national character, from the examination of only one idiom; and it would be necessary to collect and compare a large number of examples to arrive at satisfactory conclusions on this head. But we should look into the philosophy of idiom more keenly, for here we are most likely to find a key to the character of every civilised nation.

Another example of this variety may be seen in the form of address adopted in the different countries of Europe. We English speak to one another in the second person plural, even when we address one person. We say 'you are,' to one

single person, and if we have to address a thousand, we must use the same form. This may, probably, partly account for the grammatical fault so commonly made by the uneducated—‘*you was.*’ Feeling that they are speaking to only one person, and not knowing that the pronoun (you) is, strictly speaking, plural, they very naturally—though, of course, incorrectly—put the ‘you’ and the ‘was’ together.

The French also adopt the second person plural in the same case—‘*vous êtes.*’ But they use the second person singular much more frequently than we do, especially between relations and intimate friends. ‘*Tu*’ and ‘*toi,*’ however, have lost much of their former charm since the great revolution, when the levelling spirit of the Government merged all differences of rank into one common form of address. In certain circumstances, the French use the third person singular as a mark of respect. When a lady goes into a shop in Paris, the first question asked her is, ‘*Qu’est-ce que madame désire ?*’ and, in the same way, her servant says to her, ‘*Madame, a-t-elle sonné ?*’

The Germans, in the same circumstances, use the third person plural—‘*Sie sind,*’ literally ‘they are.’ This usage has prevailed in Germany ever since the sixteenth century, and is supposed to express respect. But in cases of intimacy, or

relationship, the Germans also use the pronoun of the second person singular. A German husband always addresses his wife, or a brother his sister, as *du*, but if scorn or contempt be intended, then the third person singular is adopted. In Germany, the best way to get rid of an importunate beggar is to exclaim, 'Was will *er*?' which is about equivalent to our 'What does the fellow want?'

Majesty still speaks, in this country, in the plural number. The Queen issues a proclamation, beginning with:—'Given at *our* court of St. James', &c. The editorial 'we' is also well known as expressing a certain importance and authority. In Italy, the form used in addressing any one is the third person singular, 'Come *sta*,' literally, 'How does he stand?'

If we compare the words which express degrees of kindred or relationship in one language with those of a corresponding class in another, we shall find distinctly different pictures. The French words 'mari' and 'femme,' merely show a difference of sex. 'Mari' is from the Latin 'maritus' (mas, maris), 'a male,' and 'femme,' is derived from 'femina,' 'female.' But if we put against these the corresponding English terms 'husband' and 'wife,' a totally new scene is opened to our view. 'Husband' is etymologically, the 'man of the house,' or the 'house-protector;' and the 'wife' is the 'weaving-one.'

Indeed, we shall find that most of the Saxon words expressing degrees of kindred, have reference to occupations. The *husband* was the head or protector of the house. The wife (as her name shows) *wove* the cloth for the use of the family. But before the cloth could be woven, it must be *spun*, and this was done by the grown-up unmarried women, for that reason called '*spinsters*.' The word '*daughter*' is traced to a Sanscrit root, '*dhu*'—milk; whence we infer that the daughters milked the cows, a very appropriate occupation in a primitive state of society. The word '*son*' is supposed to be derived from a Sanscrit root '*su*' or '*pu*,' originally signifying '*clean*,' from which we may conclude that their office was to *clean* out the house. The '*husband*' then was the '*protector*;' the '*wife*,' the '*weaver*;' the '*unmarried women*,' the '*spinners*' (or '*spinsters*'); the '*daughters*,' the '*milkers*;' and the '*sons*,' the '*cleaners*.' With what hallowed feelings are all these words associated, and what a vivid picture do they present of the primitive simplicity of family society! No such picture of domestic life is exhibited in the Latin or French words which express these relations, and we may look in vain for anything of this sort in the Romance languages.

The Teutonic view of the place of punishment

in a future life, somewhat differs from the Romance. We English call it *hell*, the French and Italians, *enfer* and *inferno*. Our word is derived from the old Saxon verb '*helan*,' 'to cover up' or 'hide;' '*enfer*' and '*inferno*' are from '*inferus*,' 'below,' so that the Germanic idea is here 'a concealed or covered place;' the classical view of the same is 'the place below, or underground.'

If we compare the English word '*shoe*,' with the French '*soulier*,' we shall also find a difference in the original meaning. They both represent the same article of dress, but our word '*shoe*' is from '*shove*,' it is that into which we '*shove*' the foot; whereas the French '*soulier*' rather suggests '*sandal*' than '*shoe*,' properly so called. It means literally, something 'bound under' (*sous-lié*), i.e. under the foot.

Our common word '*thimble*,' is connected with '*thumb*,' on which it was originally worn. The Germans choose to call this article '*Fingerhut*,' literally, a '*finger-hat*,' i.e. a hat or covering for the finger.

## CHAPTER XI.

## COMPOUND WORDS.

ONE of the greatest advantages a language can possess, is the power of forming compound words. This materially contributes to its conciseness;—makes it comparatively easy to express much in few words—and thus assists, by concentrating its force, in rendering it vigorous and impressive. This power of compounding is found chiefly in the Teutonic languages of Europe; and is comparatively unknown in the Romance. In our own case, it was considerably modified by the Norman Conquest, which introduced a French (or Latin) element into English. We still, however, possess this power to a considerable extent; and herein we enjoy certain advantages unknown to French or Italian. German, the most cultivated of all the Teutonic languages, has much more of this characteristic; and, in point of closeness and compactness of expression, is superior to English. But



there are symptoms of its still further decrease in our language, and it is worthy of observation that the general tendency with us is to give up Saxon compounds, and to substitute for them Latin or French terms. The old word 'deathsmán' has its present equivalent in 'executioner;' 'mildheartedness' has become 'mercy;' 'long-suffering,' 'patience,' &c. The verb 'to gainsay' still lingers in the language, but its place is now generally taken by 'to contradict.' 'To gainstrive' is supplanted by 'to oppose.' 'To inspect' is preferred before 'to look into;' and 'to despise' is used rather than 'to look down upon.'

The first English poet who gave prominence to this power of combination was Chapman, who applied it with wonderfully happy effect in his Homer's *Iliad*, in translating the compound Greek epithets which so frequently occur in that poem; such as 'swift-footed;' 'ivory-wristed;' 'white-armed;' 'many-headed;' 'rosy-fingered,' &c. Most of these were afterwards adopted by Pope. There is a tendency in some modern English writers to carry this compounding power to an unwarrantable extent, a practice which should certainly be resisted, as being opposed to the genius of our language, and also giving evidence of aping after Germanic forms, and thus transgressing the proper limits of the language. The

late Madame d'Arblay, in her 'Memoirs of Dr. Burney, speaks of the very-handsome,-though-no-longer - in - her - bloom - Mrs. Stevens!' and this authoress also has the 'sudden-at-the-moment-though-from-lingering - illness - often - previously-expected-death.' But this is really too bad. 'It out-Herods Herod;' and in these cases is a mere piece of affectation.

The mania at one time for these long-tailed adjectives, was very cleverly ridiculed by the brothers James and Horace Smith, in their 'Rejected Addresses.' Here in caricaturing the style of the 'Morning Post,' they speak of the 'not-a-bit-the-less-on-that-account-to-be-universally-execrated-monster-Bonaparte.' Another of these extraordinary epithets is:—'That-deeply-to-be-abhorred-and-highly-to-be-blamed-stratagem-the-Gunpowder-Plot!' But the climax of the caricature is reached in the following. Speaking of Covent-garden market, the writer calls it 'The-in-general-strewn-with-cabbage-stalks-but-on-Saturday-night-lighted-up-with-lamps-market-of-Covent-garden!!' But such legitimate compound forms as 'ill-assorted,' 'cloud-capped,' 'far-darting,' &c., are highly valuable, and of great service to the language. It is to be observed that none of these are literally translatable into French. For such an adjective as 'broken-hearted,' there is no corresponding

equivalent in that language. The only way to express, in French, any approach to the meaning of our word, is to use a ponderous circumlocution, which will require at least three or four terms. The expression is thus enfeebled by being broken up into a number of words, and it loses all the force and vigour of the English. A 'broken-hearted father' would be probably expressed in French by 'un père qui a le cœur brisé'—exactly five words for our one. And so of all other compound terms. In fact, French does not lend itself to closeness and compactness of expression; and, in this respect, is far inferior to any of the Teutonic languages.

One peculiarity of the Saxon part of English is its monosyllabic nature. This was chiefly caused by the falling-off of the endings. All our prepositions and conjunctions, beside most of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives in common use, are monosyllables. These form the staple of the English language, and are the chief elements of closeness and brevity of expression. Our legitimate compound words seldom consist of more than two, or at most three, elements. The greater number are made up of monosyllables; as 'milk-maid,' 'oat-meal,' 'foot-boy,' 'hail-storm,' &c. In a few cases, they are compounded of three terms, as 'out-of-doors,' 'matter-of-fact,' 'out-of-the-way,'

&c.; but these are comparatively rare. There are few, if perhaps any, cases of English words which have more than seven syllables. This seems to be the length of our tether in this respect. Perhaps it is as well that it should be so; for whatever may be said of the use of the compounding principle, as giving closeness and energy of expression, there is no doubt that, when carried to excess, it has a directly contrary effect. When a very large number of elements are fused together into one word, there is naturally a difficulty in getting at the original root and primary meaning of the whole; and the expression becomes cumbersome and unintelligible.

This combining or compounding power is of different degrees in different languages, but in the Mexican language it is carried to an incredible extent. Here, combinations are admitted so easily, that the simplest ideas are buried under a load of accessories. For example, the word for a 'priest,' consists of eleven syllables, and is there called 'notlazomahuizleopixcatatzin,' which means literally, 'venerable minister of God, whom I love as my father.' A still more comprehensive word is 'amatlacuilolquitcatlaxtlahuitli,' which means 'the reward given to a messenger who brings a hieroglyphical map conveying intelligence.'

This system displays a most curious mechanism,

which, by bringing the greatest number of ideas into the smallest possible compass, condenses whole sentences into a single word. Many of our older writers indulged in derivatives and compound words to an extent which the language does not now admit, in consequence of its having lost part of its Saxon character. We still have 'to undo;' but to 'unput' (for to take away) and to 'un-destroy' (for to rebuild) were formerly used, and Fuller even employs the verb '*to ungrayhair*,' in the sense of 'to pull out gray hairs.' He writes of a man being 'ungrayhaired,' when all his gray hairs were plucked out of his head!

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE PRONUNCIATION OF WORDS.

It is simply impossible to express sound by writing, and therefore all instruction in pronunciation should be given *vivâ voce*. A pronouncing Dictionary may sometimes afford assistance; but in many cases it must fail, as it is an attempt to explain varieties or shades of sound by varieties of shape, i.e. combinations of written letters—in fine, objects of one sense by those of another.

It is not easy to fix a standard of pronunciation. At one time the stage, then the bar, and, later still, the pulpit, have been considered as authorities in this matter. But all these are now rejected, and the conversation of the highest classes in London society is now looked upon as the standard of English pronunciation.

Pronunciation, like everything else connected with language, varies continually with the influence of time and fashion; and it is well known that,



even fifty years ago, many English words were pronounced differently from the present practice. It was formerly the fashion to pronounce 'leisure' (which now rhymes with 'pleasure') as if written 'leezure' (to rhyme with 'seizure'). This was never a vulgar pronunciation; it was done by the highest classes. It was also the fashion to pronounce 'oblige' more like the French verb 'obliger' as if written 'obleege,' and this also was the practice with the best educated. 'Gold' also was formerly pronounced by good speakers as if rhyming with 'ruled;' now it properly rhymes with 'old' or 'cold.'

We may conclude, from some of Pope's rhymes, that, in the early part of the eighteenth century, our language was not pronounced exactly as it is at present. He has 'line' and 'join' rhyming with each other; also 'vice' and 'destroys,' 'power' and 'secure,' 'safe' and 'laugh,' 'obey' and 'tea,' &c. Some of these may have been peculiar to the poet himself, and may be regarded as bad rhymes; still, as Pope was an authority for the language of his own time, most of them were, in all probability, recognised as correct.

Stories are told of the peculiar pronunciation of some of the leading literati of the last century which appear scarcely credible. Dr. Johnson is said to have pronounced the word 'fair' like 'fear,'

and the adverb 'once' as if written 'woonse.' He also called 'punch' 'poonsh.' Garrick was often remarked for saying 'shupreme' and 'shuperior' for 'supreme' and 'superior.' He also pronounced 'Israel' as 'Isrel,' 'villain' as if 'villin,' and, still more strangely, 'appeal' as 'appal.'

John Kemble had several peculiarities of pronunciation. He is known to have always said 'bird' for 'beard,' 'ferse' for 'fierce,' and my head 'aitches' (for 'aches'). He persisted, too, in pronouncing 'Cato' with the *a* broad, as if written 'Cāāto.' Of this peculiarity an amusing anecdote is related. 'One evening, at the Dublin Theatre, after the performance of Addison's tragedy, the manager appeared on the stage, and made the following statement:—"Ladies and gentlemen, to-morrow evening, with your permission, the tragedy of Cato will be repeated, the part of 'Cāāto' by Mr. Kemble.'"'

Another story is told of the same eminent actor, who, when George III. said to him: 'Mr. Kemble, will you "obleege" me with a pinch of your snuff?' replied: 'With pleasure, your Majesty; but it would become your royal lips much better to say "oblige."'

Some of the actor Quin's pronunciations would be now considered very singular. He always pronounced the word 'face' as if written 'fāāce,' and

said 'trōpically' for 'tröpically.' Also, in a certain classical drama, addressing the Roman guard, he desired them to lower their 'faces' (meaning their 'fasces').

But, whatever may be the recognised standard of pronunciation, there always will be a refined and a vulgar mode of speech—one adopted by the cultivated and well-informed, and the other used by the rude and illiterate. It must be understood that there are only two ways in which our pronunciation may be at fault. 1. The accent may be placed on the wrong syllable; or, 2. a wrong sound may be given to the vowels. Under the first head may be placed such faults as the following:—Some will say 'fánatic' instead of 'fanátic,' and perhaps as often 'lunátic' for 'lúnatic.' Again, 'mischíevous' is wrong, both in accent and tone; for the accent should here be on the first syllable, and the sound of the second should be close—míschíevous. We also not unfrequently hear people call the word 'extánt,' instead of 'éxtant;' but, as the accent is always on the first in words of a like formation—such as 'cónstant,' 'dístant,' 'ínstant,' &c.—there is no good reason why 'éxtant' should be made an exception. Another word in which the accent is often misplaced is 'réspited.' Many will say 'respíted,' which is decidedly against good usage.

In some words the accent still seems to be

unsettled. Perhaps we hear the word ‘óbdurate’ as often with the accent on the second as on the first syllable. Many scholars pronounce the word ‘obdūrate,’ probably because the *u* is long in the Latin ‘dūrus;’ but this must also follow the accent of similar forms. We always say ‘áccūrate,’ ‘índūrate,’ ‘áugūrate,’ ‘sátūrate,’ &c. ; and therefore, by analogy, it should be óbdūrate.’

By many the accent is placed on the second syllable of the word ‘applicable;’ but the general custom is to lay it on the first, and the best practice is to say ‘ápplicable,’ and not ‘applicáble.’

Another case of wrong tone may be heard in the pronunciation of the word ‘*ínfínite*.’ We still not unfrequently hear in the pulpit, ‘infinite goodness,’ &c. In dissyllables ‘ite’ final is sometimes pronounced long; as in ‘polite,’ ‘finite,’ ‘recite,’ &c; but in words of more than two syllables the final ‘ite’ is, with few exceptions, pronounced short. We always (properly) say ‘defínite,’ ‘exquísite,’ ‘opposíte,’ ‘favouríte,’ &c.

Many have special difficulties in the pronunciation of certain consonants. The correct sound of *r* is a medium between the strong rough *R* of the Irish, and the feeble indistinct tone given it by the London cockney. The Irishman will tell you that he is very ‘war(u)m’ after his ‘wor(u)k.’ But in London, one often hears, instead of

'garden,' 'gauden,' for 'forth' 'fauth,' and for 'card' 'caud,' &c.

Many Englishmen have a difficulty in pronouncing the rough *r*, substituting for it the sound of *w*. These say 'woom' for 'room,' 'pwoduct' for 'product,' 'wagged' for 'ragged,' &c. This habit, unless checked early, is likely to become incurable.

Others again contract a vicious habit of pronouncing the *r* far back in the throat, instead of forming it by vibrating the tip of the tongue. This is what the French call '*parler gras*.'

There is one very improper use of *r* which must be here mentioned ; viz. the addition of this letter to certain words ending in *a*. Some pronounce 'sofa' as if written 'sofar.' Also they speak of their papar and mammar, &c. It is scarcely necessary to say that this is a positive vulgarity.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the perversity of our nature more evident than in the pronunciation of, (1), *h* silent and *h* aspirate ; and, (2), *v* and *w*. These sounds are constantly confounded. Many pronounce *h* where it is not required, and leave it out where it should be sounded. They will say 'abit' for 'habit,' 'erd' for 'herd,' 'ill' for 'hill,' 'old' for 'hold,' &c. ; and, on the other hand, 'hall' for 'all,' 'hodd' for 'odd,' 'huncle' for 'uncle,' &c.

The same vice exists in the pronunciation of *v*

and *w*. It is clear that the speaker *can* pronounce both these letters, but he inveterately persists in misplacing them. He will say 'weal' and 'wi-negar,' and at the same time, 'Vy do you veeper?' These faults are made almost exclusively by ignorant, uneducated people.

Under this head may be also mentioned the incorrect pronunciation of *wh* initial. By many the *h* is here left out altogether, and these pronounce the pronoun *which* exactly as if written '*witch*.' In Anglo-Saxon, whence all this class of words comes, they were spelled, and probably pronounced, with the *h* first—'*hw*;' and even now, if we listen attentively to those who pronounce them correctly, we shall always hear the aspirate first. We should surely make a difference between '*who*' and '*woo*,' '*when*' and '*wen*,' '*where*' and '*wear*,' &c.; and, though it would be incorrect to mark the aspirate too roughly, the *h* in such words should be always fairly brought out.

We also perpetually hear (especially in London) words ending in '*ing*' pronounced as if written '*in*;' as, for example, '*standin*,' '*runnin*,' '*goin*,' for '*standing*,' '*running*,' '*going*,' &c. In one case a *k* is put for the *g*. '*Nothink*' is said for '*nothing*.'

There is a disposition in many readers and speakers to give a sort of veiled sound to unaccented monosyllables, so that the true pure tone



of the vowel is not heard. This is a very common fault. By such readers 'for' is pronounced '*fur*,' 'of' is called '*uv*,' 'not' '*nut*,' 'from' '*frum*,' and 'was' '*wuz*,' &c. &c. It should be remembered that, whether such words be, or be not, accented, the sound of the vowel should always be full and pure.

A point of great importance is to always carefully give the true sound to an unaccented vowel which begins a word. We should never let emotion degenerate into '*im*motion,' 'emergency' into '*im*mergency,' 'obedience' into '*ub*bedience,' &c. No accent, however, should be placed on these syllables, but the initial vowel should be always pronounced in its proper and pure sound.

It is right to be just as careful with vowels which are medial and unaccented. We should not allow 'monument' to sound as 'moniment,' nor must 'calculate' be pronounced with the u close. This fault often happens with words ending in 'ety' or 'ity.' We hear over and over again, in the pulpit, the words 'trinity,' 'dignity,' 'society,' &c. pronounced as if written 'trinity,' 'dignity,' 'sociaty,' &c.

The pronunciation of the word 'knowledge,' with the o long, is still occasionally heard; but it is now almost universally called 'knōwledge' (to rhyme with 'college').

Some pronounce 'haunt,' 'jaunt,' 'taunt,' 'jaundice,' &c. with the diphthong broad, having the same sound as in 'raw' or 'saw.' But all these should rhyme with 'aunt,' which is never pronounced broad.

The ending '*ile*' of certain adjectives sometimes offers a difficulty of pronunciation. Here, in the words 'hostile,' 'missile,' 'servile,' 'reptile,' 'puerile,' and 'volatile' the *i* has a long sound; but in 'fertile,' 'fragile,' 'futile,' and 'imbecile' the *i* must be short.

Some incorrectly give the long sound '*ile*' to the broader diphthong '*oil*.' They call '*oil*' '*ile*,' '*boil*' and '*broil*' '*bile*' and '*brile*,' &c. In the age of the poet Pope, these two sounds were probably closer to each other than they are now; for he makes '*join*' rhyme with '*line*:'—

While expletives their feeble aid do *join*,  
And ten low words oft creep in one dull *line*.

A story is told of some one dining at a tavern who was asked by the waiter whether he wished to have his sole '*briled*?' To which he replied that he did not care whether it was '*briled*' or '*biled*,' as long as it was not '*spiled*!!'

The words 'fast,' 'past,' 'mast,' and other similar combinations are often pronounced either too broad or too close. In the provinces we often

hear 'mauster,' 'faust,' 'paust,' and 'caunt,' whilst the affected Londoner says 'mĕster,' 'fĕst,' 'pĕst,' &c.

Neither of the two is right, but the proper pronunciation lies between them. Again, 'pūt' (which rhymes with 'foot') must not be called 'pŭt' (to rhyme with 'bŭt'), nor must pŭlpit be called pŭlpit. Some persist in pronouncing 'covetous' as if written 'covetious,' and 'tremendous' as 'tremendious;' and these are apparently equally attached to 'pronunciation' and 'arithmetic.' Lastly, the participle of the verb 'to be' must always sound exactly like the vegetable 'bĕan,' and not as a wine-'bin.'

The letter *u*, in many words, is really a diphthong, and has the double sound of *e* + *oo*. This is heard in such words as 'tŭne,' 'stŭpid,' 'tŭbe,' 'prodŭce,' 'solitŭde,' 'pictŭre,' &c., which should be sounded as if written 'te + une,' 'ste + upid,' 'te + ube,' &c., the one part uttered rapidly after the other. But many pronounce such words, incorrectly, as if written 'toone,' 'stoopid,' 'pictŕ,' &c. This is a vicious cockney pronunciation.

There is no termination we should be more careful to pronounce fairly out than 'ow' final, which, when unaccented, frequently degenerates into 'er.' The words are properly pronounced 'widow,' 'window,' and 'fellow,' &c., and not 'wid-der,' 'winder,' and 'feller!!'

The word 'tobacco' also is often wrongly pronounced 'tobaccer.'

Some, who would be over-refined in their pronunciation, make two syllables (instead of one) of the words 'sky,' 'kind.' They expand them into 'ske-y,' 'key-ind,' &c. This is an absurd affectation.

A clear distinct articulation is an essential principle of a correct pronunciation; for, unless every syllable be uttered clearly, the word cannot have its proper effect. How often do we hear careless readers and speakers push one monosyllable into another, so as to convey the impression that there is but one word, where, in fact, there are two. How often do we hear: '*Frin* this case,' instead of '*For* in this case;' '*Fra* time,' for '*For* a time;' '*Nevery* occasion,' for '*On* every occasion;' '*Tinders*,' for '*It* hinders!' &c.

Special care should be taken to utter *unaccented* syllables distinctly; as these are the most likely to be neglected. It is this neglect which produces such bad pronunciations as 'reg'lar,' 'sing'lar,' 'sim'lar,' and which makes 'extraordinary,' 'extrordinary;' 'usual,' 'uzhal;' and 'violent,' 'vilent.' It is from the same cause that the *d* in 'and' (a word which is seldom accented) is so frequently unheard, especially when the following word begins with a vowel, in such

forms as 'He *an* I,' for 'He *and* I;' 'My uncle *an* aunt,' for 'my uncle *and* aunt,' &c.

The Irish have several peculiarities of pronunciation, which must be here noticed.

1. They sound 'ea' (the long ē) as 'ay;' 'plēase' they pronounce exactly as 'plays,' and 'tēa' as 'tay.'

2. 'Door' and 'floor' properly rhyme with 'more' and 'sore,' but the Irish give to these words the sound of 'oo' in 'poor.'

3. They also pronounce 'catch' (which exactly rhymes with 'match') as 'ketch' (to rhyme with 'fetch'). This is also a vulgar pronunciation in England.

4. They give the short instead of the more open sound of *u* in the words 'pudding,' 'cushion,' and 'foot.' They make 'pudding' rhyme with 'südden;' 'cushion' with 'rush on;' and 'foot' with 'but.' They also give the same sound to the vowels in 'ströve' and 'dröve,' making them rhyme with 'löve' and 'döve,' and pronouncing them as if they were written 'struv' and 'druv.'

5. Another of their peculiarities is to leave out the 'g' in 'strength' and 'length,' pronouncing these words as if they were written 'strenth' and 'lenth.' They also omit the 'd' in pronouncing 'breadth,' and call it 'breth.'

6. They give the long sound of 'e' to the close

'i' in such words as 'delicious,' 'malicious,' 'vicious,' &c., and call them 'deleecious,' 'maleecious,' 'veecious.'

7. They pronounce 'o' before 'ld' like the 'ow' in 'how,' and they pronounce 'cold' and 'bold' as if these words rhymed with 'howled' or 'growled.'



## CHAPTER XIII.

## SLANG WORDS AND AMERICANISMS.

No language is, or ever has been, in the strict sense of the word, *pure*. All languages are continually borrowing and lending—adopting words from foreign sources, and contributing from their own store to that of others. It is now well known that the ancient Greeks borrowed largely from the Oriental tongues, and lent words and forms to Latin. Latin, again, borrowed from Greek, and contributed to form the modern Italian, Spanish, and French. The modern German language is just now strongly affected by a French influence; and French itself, though for the most part Latin, contains many Celtic and not a few Germanic words. Spanish, which is in the main Latin, has a very considerable admixture of Arabic, brought in by the Moors in the eighth century; and English is well known to be made up of Anglo-Saxon, Norman, French, and Latin.

But languages are not only subject to these attacks from without, a process of internal corruption is also set up, and appears in various forms. One of these may be recognised in the principle of contraction. It may be laid down as a rule that words, as they grow older, degenerate in meaning and contract in form. This contraction probably originated in a loose, careless way of speaking, which afterwards affected the written language. Sometimes a letter or syllable is cut off from the beginning of a word; sometimes one is taken from the middle, or from the end. '*Bus*' is now all we have left (at any rate, in ordinary conversation) of '*omnibus*.' '*Fantasy*' has lost its middle syllable, and appears as '*fancy*,' and '*cab*' does duty for '*cabriolet*.' One conclusion this result enables us to draw is that the contracted forms are always the more modern. The form '*courtesy*' existed before '*curtsy*;' '*procurator*' preceded '*proctor*;' and '*minute*' was known before '*mite*.' Whether these contractions are to be regarded favourably or otherwise may be a question, but there is no doubt that they are all produced by the operation of a natural law of language which no human power will ever be able to prevent.

When a word is warped or distorted from its original form, either by a vicious or slovenly pronunciation, or from a mistaken notion of its deri-

vation, it is said to be a corruption. One of these corruptions appears in our word 'surgeon.' The French 'chirurgien,' from which it immediately comes, shows more clearly its Greek origin— $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho$  (cheir), a hand; and  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omega$  (ergo), I work—i.e. a hand-worker, or manual operator. But a careless pronunciation, probably aided by a natural tendency to contraction, has caused the word with us to dwindle down to 'surgeon.'

As an illustration of corruption arising from a false notion of its derivation, we may take the word 'island.' How did the *s* get into it? This *s* is not sounded, and yet it must be written. In the one word 'island,' there is a mixture of Latin and German. The first syllable is of Romance, and the second of Teutonic origin. The Latin for 'island' is 'insula,' from 'in' and 'salò,' the 'salt,' i.e. in the salt (sea, understood). The Anglo-Saxon word for the same idea was 'ea-land.' Here 'ea' means 'water.' This 'ea,' or 'ey,' is found in many names of islands, as 'Anglesea,' 'Jersey,' 'Guernsey,' &c. 'Ea-land,' then meant 'water-land,' or 'land surrounded by water.' In the earlier editions of 'Paradise Lost,' the word always appears written 'iland' (without the *s*), which points more clearly to its Saxon derivation, and is nearer in spelling to the modern German—'Eiland.' The '*s*' was afterwards inserted, from a mistaken

notion that the word was of Latin, and not German, origin.

A false analogy will sometimes give rise to a corrupted form of spelling. The past tense of 'can' was originally 'coude,' not 'could;' and the *l* was afterwards introduced, from the apparent analogy of the word to 'would,' from 'will,' and 'should,' from 'shall.' This, then, is a corruption. But, though at first incorrect, the *l* must, of course, be now retained.

Proper names, both of places and persons, have suffered a good deal from this influence. Words of this class are most likely to be corrupted, because they are most frequently in the mouths of the common people. That 'Birmingham' should be called 'Brummagem,' 'Cirencester,' 'Siseter,' and 'Wavertree,' 'Wartree,' is not surprising when we remember that these corruptions originated with those who had often to pronounce, but seldom, if ever, to write these names. But what is, perhaps, more strange, many of these corruptions are now adopted by the upper classes. Thus, in all ranks of society, the proper name 'Beauchamp' is now pronounced 'Beecham;' 'St. John' is called 'Sinjon;' 'Cholmondeley' is pronounced 'Chumley,' and 'Marjoribanks' 'March banks.'

*Slang Words.*

Among the many signs of the corruption of the English language, one, which is not the least remarkable, is the prevalent use of slang words and phrases. That certain terms should be peculiar to certain callings, trades, or professions, may be naturally expected, but that these should be extended into general conversation, is a corroborative proof of the strong liking people now have for any thing unusual or out-of-the-way. One very curious fact may be here observed. While the style of most of our periodical writers soars upwards, and affects the lofty and sublime, that of general conversation is the very reverse, and sinks to the low and vulgar.

A difference must be here made between ‘cant’ and ‘slang.’ The first signifies the secret language of thieves, beggars, and tramps, by which they endeavour to conceal their evil deeds from the public. The knowledge and practice of this kind of language is confined to the above-named fraternities. But slang consists of those vulgar, unauthorised terms, which have come into fashion during the last eighty or ninety years, and which are not confined to one class, but may be now heard in almost every grade of society.

In all trades and professions there are certain

terms peculiar to each, which are properly called 'technical;' these can hardly be denominated slang. For example, in the language of actors, a '*length*' signifies forty-two lines of the part each has to study for the stage. They say, a part consists of so many '*lengths*.' This, and other such terms, are seldom, if ever, heard beyond the circle to which they properly belong. But slang is found in almost all classes of society. That of high life is drawn from various sources. One of its phases may be seen in the French words and forms which would-be fashionable people so delight in using. To call a breakfast a *déjeuner* is absurd, especially as we have a very good word of our own to express that meal. Leaders of fashion never speak of the fashionable world; but always of the '*beau monde*.' This '*beau monde*,' they tell us, give '*recherchés*' entertainments, attended by the '*élite*' of society. Lady *So-and-So* gave a '*thé dansant*,' which, of course, '*went off with éclat*,' &c. &c. Many so-called fashionable ladies and gentlemen would, probably, be deeply offended to hear such language termed slang; but any words or forms which are not recognised English certainly deserve to be so stigmatised.

This form of slang is confined chiefly to the would-be fashionables, and to those writers of very questionable taste, who use what they think



funny and startling expressions in a novel and flippant way. Cookery also has given us much slang of this sort. If we were to ask, in an ordinary English hotel, for 'côtelettes à la jardinière,' or a 'vol-au-vent à la financière,' the people of the house would probably stare at us; but these and such expressions form the staple of the style of many popular novelists.

Of parliamentary slang, too, there is no lack of examples. Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Disraeli are perhaps better known as *Pam* and *Dizzy*, than by their proper names. A single vote to one candidate at an election is called a 'plumper;' and those who have boiled a pot in a house, to qualify themselves to vote, are termed 'potwallopers.' Among military men, anyone unusually particular about his dress or personal appearance, is a 'dandy' or a 'swell.' They also call a 'title' a 'handle to your name,' and a kind-hearted, good-natured fellow is, with them, a 'trump,' or a 'brick.'

The Universities also have their slang terms. The graduates use 'crib' for a house; 'deadmen' for empty wine-bottles; 'governor,' or 'relieving-officer,' for a father; 'plucked,' for defeated or rejected in an examination; and 'row' for a disturbance.

The Eton and Harrow boys make use among themselves of many slang terms, which are not

often heard outside their bounds; but when they return home for the holidays, they frequently infect their sisters with some of their strange phraseology. A boy will sometimes puzzle his sisters at home, by asking them if they do not find his 'togger' absolutely 'stunning;' or what they think of his 'tile,' or white 'choker;' adding that they are not yet paid for; but that he supposes the 'governor' will have to 'stump up,' or 'fork out the blunt,' &c.

Lawyers also have their slang; and this is not surprising, when we remember the many opportunities they must have of hearing it, from their connection with the police courts, and with life in its worst phases. With them, taking the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors Act, is to be 'white-washed;' and to draw up a fraudulent balance-sheet is to 'cook' accounts, &c.

But of all the forms of slang, the one most abundant in variety of terms is the mercantile. It has been calculated that there are as many as thirty-six vulgar synonyms for the one simple word *money*. The following are a few of them: 'blunt,' 'tin,' 'coppers,' 'browns,' 'shiners,' 'yellow-boys,' 'flimsies' (bank notes); 'fivers' (five pound notes), &c. &c. In city phraseology, 100,000*l.* is called a *plum*, and one million sterling is a *marigold*. On the Stock Exchange buyers and

sellers for the account are called 'bulls' and 'bears :'  
 a broker who is unable to pay his debts, is there  
 called 'a lame duck ;' and, if expelled from the  
 house, he is said 'to waddle.'

But though most of these terms will never form  
 a legitimate part of the English language, some  
 of them are certainly not considered so vulgar as  
 others. It is said that the elegant Lord Chester-  
 field was the author of the word 'humbug,' which,  
 though it may have been considered as slang in  
 his day, can hardly be so called now. Another  
 word, 'hoax,' was condemned by Swift as low  
 and vulgar, this, too, has made its way ; and is  
 now not so revolting to good taste as it probably  
 was when first used. Both these words, 'hum-  
 bug' and 'hoax,' are to be found in Dr. Latham's  
 edition of Johnson's Dictionary.

Thackeray immortalised 'snob' in his cele-  
 brated 'papers ;' and though the word is not to  
 be recommended, it must be allowed that it is  
 very expressive. Lord Cairns, in a speech in  
 the House of Commons, called 'dodge' 'that  
 homely but expressive term.' Nor is 'crusty,' in  
 the sense of 'peevish,' so low as it was once  
 thought. It has long been a question, whether  
 the word 'bamboozle' should be admitted. This  
 also is to be found in Latham's *Johnson*, though  
 it is there entered as 'colloquial.'

But though it may be allowed to use some of these terms occasionally in familiar discourse, no one of any sense or good taste will ever think of indulging in slang language, either spoken or written. It is, no doubt, a bad sign of the times, and much to be deplored, that it is so common. Some writers have calculated that there are, at least, three thousand slang terms in common use. The above are but a few examples of this widespread corruption. We may regard it, as concerns our language, in the light of a pest to society. It takes a long time to clear the atmosphere from the baneful influences of certain epidemics. Now, the language of every-day conversation is suffering from this infectious disease, and it becomes the duty of every Englishman who has a proper feeling for his language, to refrain from this evil himself, and to throw in its way every possible discouragement.

### *Americanisms.*

The recklessness with which the Americans use the English language bids fair to flood it with many new and strange terms. It is very possible that some of these words may some day take their places as forming part of the legitimate materials of our language ; and it is also possible, as the Americans themselves sometimes declare, that some of the

words and phrases which are now called American, are, in reality, genuine English words which have become obsolete in the mother tongue. But, in the mean time, they certainly must be regarded as interlopers—candidates for an office to which they are not yet, if they ever will be, entitled.

One rather curious explanation has been given of the word ‘guess.’ It is well known that the Americans use it in the sense of *to know for certain*. ‘I guess’ is equivalent, in American phraseology, to ‘I know it’—‘I am sure of it.’ Now, it has been argued that this is the proper meaning of the word—that it is derived from the German ‘gewiss,’ which comes originally from ‘wissen,’ to know. When first imported into America, in the seventeenth century, they say that it had this meaning in English—that we in England have since then altered the meaning of the word, and that the Americans have preserved its original signification. Even supposing that this could be proved, it does not follow that the American practice is the right one; nor, of course, that we should alter our present meaning of the word, and conform to the American custom. The fountain-head of the English language is in England, and in no other country; and all departures from the English use of English words must be looked upon as faults against purity of style.



Americanisms may be considered under two heads—1st, legitimate English words used in a wrong sense; and, 2nd, words of a new invention, mutilated or distorted from some known or unknown root. In the first class we may place the adjective ‘tall.’ This the Americans use in a novel and unrecognised sense. In English it is properly applied only to concrete nouns; as, ‘a tall man,’ or ‘a tall tree,’ &c. But, in the United States, we continually hear of ‘tall talk,’ or even ‘a tall smell,’ &c. It is not the word that is here objected to, but the sense in which it is applied. To ‘raise’ is another of this class, which is constantly used for ‘to educate,’ or ‘bring up.’ ‘Where were you raised?’ is, in America, a very common question. Again, the word ‘liquor’ is a perfectly good English noun; but what a strange innovation is ‘to liquor!’ A genuine Yankee says, ‘Stranger, will you “liquor?”’ ‘Handsome,’ ‘clever,’ and ‘fix’ are all three genuine English, but ‘to play *handsome* on the flute’ is undoubtedly bad English. We sometimes qualify persons, but never things, as ‘clever.’ A ‘clever’ boy, or a ‘clever’ man, &c., but never, as in America, a ‘clever’ house or a ‘clever’ cargo. Again, in America a very common use of ‘to fix’ is ‘to prepare,’ or ‘put in order.’ This is not sanctioned by English usage. But ‘a fix,’ in the sense of a dilemma or predica-



ment, is condemned by literary men in the United States as a vulgarism.

The other class consists of words wholly unrecognised in English in any sense—in fine, genuine Americanisms; such words as ‘secesh,’ ‘skeddaddle,’ ‘recuperate,’ ‘rowdy,’ ‘rile,’ ‘stampede,’ &c., which can in no sense be said to belong to our language. Nor is it likely that English writers of any pretensions to good taste will ever adopt them. The Americans call the English ‘Britishers;’ to tease or vex anyone is, with them, ‘to rile’ him; to make a set speech is to ‘orate;’ a sudden panic and flight of soldiers is a ‘stampede,’ &c. There are other words of this class which it would puzzle most English writers to explain; such as ‘slick,’ ‘spry,’ ‘kedge,’ ‘boss,’ ‘absquatulate,’ &c. These are not English words, and we may pretty confidently predict that they will never become English.

There can be little doubt, however, that certain expressions now known as Americanisms were, at one time, very commonly used in English. Madame D’Arblay, as well as other writers of her time, has, over and over again, ‘mighty fine,’ ‘mighty pretty,’ &c. ‘Mighty pretty’ is exactly on a par with ‘*uncommon* nice.’ The one is just as incorrect as the other. This is a form of expression continually used by American writers. Forty or fifty years ago the adjective ‘rare’ was commonly used

for 'underdone' (meat). Now, though common enough in the United States, it is seldom, if ever, applied by us in that sense. Some of these peculiarities appear to be making way in English, in spite of our struggles against them. Such are 'to progress' for 'to advance,' 'to effectuate' for 'to accomplish,' 'right off,' or 'right away,' for 'at once' or 'immediately,' 'laid over' for 'put off,' &c.

The Americans use 'tiresome' for 'tiring;' they speak of a 'tiresome'—for a fatiguing—journey. Also a 'good' time is used for a 'pleasant' time, 'fall' for 'autumn,' and to 'go-a-head' for 'to prosper.' One American word which seems likely to establish itself in the English language is, 'a loafer.' This would seem to be derived from the German 'laufen,' to run, though it has not that meaning in the United States, where it signifies one who lounges about lazily.

In America many new terms are the offspring of a political excitement, which is sure to occur every four years, i.e. as often as a new President is elected. On these occasions such words as 'Copperheads,' 'Ring-tailed Roarers,' 'Know-nothings,' 'Fenians,' 'Wolverines,' &c., &c., are sure to make their appearance. These words may have a meaning for those who invent and use them, but to the great majority of Englishmen they are altogether a mystery.

Language, in the hands of a great poet, has been often called 'a flame of fire.' However this may be, in the hands of certain American journalists it does seem, now and then, very likely to burn their own fingers. In the New York papers we meet with the verb 'to concertize,' which may possibly mean to give a succession of concerts. We remember hearing that process once called 'going about matinéeing !' And there is quite as good authority for the one as for the other of these expressions. Another unintelligible phrase, drawn from the same source, is 'an *emergent* meeting.' This word is never used, in modern English, in a concrete sense. We may say an *emergent* occasion or *emergent* doubts, but not an *emergent* candidate or an *emergent* character. It is possible that the writer meant a meeting called together on an emergency.

The rapid communication established of late years between England and the United States has brought the two nations into a much closer connection with each other. This, in a commercial or a political view, may be of great advantage to both countries. But every advantage has its drawback, and it is very doubtful whether this condition of things is likely to benefit the English language. The Americans are well known to set great store by liberty, and of course we have no

right whatever to interfere with their opinions concerning principles or forms of political government. But it becomes a serious matter for us when they think proper to take liberties with our language. They set up for themselves, probably by way of showing their independence, new modes of spelling ; and they are perpetually introducing all sorts of meanings, words, and phrases, none of which have the remotest title to be called English. In the writings of the late N. P. Willis, we meet with such terms as the following :—‘An unletupable nature,’ ‘wideawakeity,’ ‘plumptitude,’ ‘pocketually speaking,’ ‘betweenity,’ and ‘go-awayness!’ In the same gentleman’s writings, we occasionally come across such elegant forms of expression as ‘whipping creation,’ ‘flogging Europe,’ ‘a heap of opinions,’ ‘tarnation quick,’ &c. These and all such must be looked upon as abortions or deformities of our language ; and no English writer who has any respect for his own reputation should ever think of countenancing, far less of adopting, such monstrosities.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## GENERAL REMARKS ON WORDS, ETC.

IN old English spelling, we frequently meet with *y* initial, where we now use *th*; as in ‘*ye* manners and *ye* customs,’ &c. This error probably arose from the blundering of the copyists, who mistook one letter for another. Down to the close of the reign of Edward III., two characters of the Saxon alphabet were in common use, which we have now rejected; *tha* (*þ*) (*th* hard), and *edh* (*ð*) (*th* soft). The first of these, *þ*, somewhat resembled a *y* in shape; and hence the mistake. This is, probably, the true explanation of the case, as *y* was, in all these instances, used where we now have *th*.

*Y* initial, as indicating a participle or an intensive meaning, has now become obsolete in English. But it lingered in the language till the seventeenth century, as may be seen in Milton. ‘In heaven *y*clept Euphrosyne.’ This is the *ge* initial of the modern German, as in ‘*ge*kannt,’ ‘*ge*brochen,’ &c.

Our word 'guess,' is supposed to be connected with the German 'gewiss;' where the initial *ge* may be referred to the same source. In comparing certain German with English words, we may see that this prefix (*g* or *y*) has, in most cases, fallen off, though in some few words it still retains its place. The German 'Glück,' is in English 'luck,' and the German 'gleich' has become with us 'like.' Again, 'to glow' was, in Saxon, 'hlowian.' We retain the *g* in 'gleam,' and 'glimpse,' though we lose it in 'light.' The same connection may be observed between the German 'gern,' and the English 'yearn.'

Many are puzzled when to use *ei* and when *ie* in the spelling of certain English words, when these combinations are pronounced as a long *e*. The rule is, that when a sibilant (*c* or *s*) precedes, *ei* is the right spelling; but that when any other consonant comes before, *ie* should be written. Thus, 'seize, conceive, ceiling, deceit,' &c., must have *ei*; whilst 'believe, priest, chief, retrieve,' &c., must be spelled *ie*. The word 'siege' is an exception; we here adopt the French spelling.

It is generally well known that the prefixes *ante* and *anti* have, in English, each a distinct meaning. 'Ante' is the Latin preposition for 'before.' It is found in 'antedate' (to date before); 'antechamber' (a waiting-room *before* another);



‘antecedent’ (going *before*), &c. ‘Anti’ is originally Greek, and means ‘against.’ It is found in ‘antipathy’ (a feeling *against*); ‘antidote’ (a medicine given *against*); i.e. as a preventive. But there is one exception to this explanation; viz. ‘anticipate.’ ‘Anti,’ in this case, does not mean ‘against,’ but beforehand. To ‘anticipate’ is to enjoy or suffer prospectively. The Latin *i* always becomes an *e* in French; and vice versâ. This is considered as an organic law of transformation. The Latin *mihi*, *tibi*, *sibi*, *in*, *inter*, &c., are in French *me*, *te*, *se*, *en*, *entre*. On the other hand, the Latin ‘implēre,’ ‘fallēre,’ ‘legēre,’ ‘quærēre,’ and ‘florēre,’ are in French, *remplir*, ‘faillir,’ ‘liré,’ ‘quérir,’ and ‘fleurir.’ This may be seen in ‘antichambre,’ ‘antidater,’ &c.; and the English has, in this one case, ‘anticipate,’ adopted the French form of spelling.

The difference in pronunciation between such words as ‘hōme,’ and ‘sōme;’ ‘bōne’ and ‘dōne;’ ‘alōne’ and ‘gōne,’ depends on their derivation. In these cases, the long *ō* corresponds with the modern German ‘*ei*.’ The German ‘Heim’ is the English ‘hōme.’ ‘Bein’ is in English bōne; ‘allein,’ ‘alōne,’ &c., whereas the closer sound of *o* approaches to a closer sound of *a* or *o* in German. Hence, the root *sam* (as in *sammeln*), gives the English ‘sōme.’ ‘Dōne’ is

from 'gethän,' 'cöme,' from 'kömmen,' &c. From the same cause, the adverb 'so' in English has the same long sound as in German ; whereas 'tö' and 'dö,' being from 'zu' and 'thun,' have a closer pronunciation.

It is natural to expect that as the genius of a people powerfully influences the spelling of their common terms, the same cause should operate in that of their proper names, both of persons and places. With respect to names of places, there is now and then some difficulty. The inhabitants of a town or country do not always give it the name by which it is known to foreigners. An English tourist who is a novice in continental travel, arrives at a town he has been accustomed to call '*Aix*,' or '*Aix-la-Chapelle*;' and he is not a little puzzled to hear it named '*Aachen*.' It is doubtful whether many English would recognise the German word; and yet it is certainly the one used by the Prussians from time immemorial. There are many other continental towns with whose names we English are, in general, not familiar; for example, Lüttich (Liège), Regensburg (Ratisbon), Bruxelles (Brussels), Kiöbenhavn (Copenhagen), Vliessingen (Flushing), Genf (Geneva), &c., &c.

That these differences should exist was but natural in bygone times when there was so scanty

a communication between one country and another. But nowadays, when one touch of the telegraph 'should make the whole world akin,' and when steamboats and railroads seem to be literally annihilating both time and space, it is to be regretted that some one standard form for the spelling of names of places should not be agreed on, which all should adopt, and which would be intelligible to the whole civilised world. There appears to be some probability of the continental states adopting a standard coin which shall have a universal currency. Why should they not also determine on one standard form of spelling for the names of all their towns and districts? The one change would not be more difficult than the other.

One very striking peculiarity of the English language is the extraordinary variety of senses in which many of our words, especially those of Saxon origin, may be used. A curious instance of this variety may be seen in the case of the verb 'to get.' For example: 'After I *got* (received) your letter; I immediately *got* (mounted) on horseback; and when I *got* to (reached) Canterbury, I *got* (procured) a chaise, and proceeded to town. But, the rain coming on, I *got* (caught) such a severe cold, that I could not *get* rid of it for some days. When I *got* home, I *got* up-stairs, and *got* to bed immediately; but

the next morning I found I could neither *get* down stairs, *get* my breakfast, nor *get* out of doors. I was afraid I should never *get* over this attack.' It may be reasonably doubted whether any English word of Latin or French origin has half so many and such various significations.

'*To put*' is a verb of unsettled derivation; but it has an endless variety of meanings: and is compounded with almost every preposition in the language. Latham's edition of *Johnson's Dictionary* gives about seventy different senses of this one verb, some of which are as follows: 'A man *puts by* money when he saves it up; or he *puts away* his wife when he divorces her. An insurrection may be *put down*; or a man may *put down* his name as a subscriber. A tree *puts forth* leaves, or a man *puts into* a lottery. He *puts off* his clothes, or he *puts off* a disagreeable task; he *puts out* his money at interest; or he *puts out* the light when he goes to bed; and he is terribly *put out* when things do not go well with him. He can *put together* his thoughts; but he cannot *put up* with an insult. It is unpleasant to be *put upon*; and sometimes very hard to *put things to rights*.

The French adverb *très* (very), is the Latin 'trans' (over, or across.) The prefix 'trans' is of frequent use in English as in 'transfer,' 'transfix,' 'transform,' &c. We have adopted the

French 'très' in only one word; viz. 'trespass.' This signifies either in a physical or moral sense, 'to pass a boundary.' It is still used in English, chiefly as a term of law.

Some writers on language have objected to the order of words generally adopted in certain colloquial expressions. They say that in such phrases as 'bred and born,' 'shoes and stockings,' 'coat and waistcoat,' &c., we put the cart before the horse. They would have us say 'born and bred,' 'stockings and shoes,' &c. Their argument is, that we should put these words in their *natural* order, as to time—that as a man must be born before he is bred, the proper order is 'born and bred,' and so on, in all other cases of this sort. This, however, does not seem to be the right view of the matter. In these expressions it should be remembered that whatever comes first to our knowledge, or makes the deepest impression on the mind, is naturally first uttered. True, a man must be born before he is bred; but the idea conveyed in 'bred' is first impressed on the mind, and therefore 'bred and born' is the right order. Again, we see the shoes; we can but partially see the stockings; and this is why the usual order is adopted.

Again: we never say 'the sciences and arts;' but always 'the arts and sciences.' There is here,



also, a very good reason for the general practice. It must be remembered that the arts were practised long before the sciences on which they are built were discovered. Practice always precedes theory. Language was spoken before grammars were written ; music was played and sung before the laws of harmony were understood ; and therefore, it is but reasonable that we should put the ' arts before the sciences.'

It may seem strange that in addressing an audience, the English always say 'Ladies and Gentlemen !' whereas in France we hear, 'Messieurs et Mesdames,' and in Germany, 'Meine Herren und Damen.' This order may have been adopted at a time when ladies had not the influence in society which they now possess. We have not the reputation for gallantry which our continental neighbours enjoy ; and yet, in this instance, we may perhaps set them a lesson of politeness.

Connected with this subject may be mentioned that doubling of terms which occurs in our Liturgy so frequently, that it may be regarded as a characteristic of its style. The compilers of our Church Service, probably in their anxiety to make the text intelligible even to the commonest understanding, continually put two nouns or two verbs together, the second generally explaining the first. In these cases we shall find one of the terms of



French or Latin, and the other of Saxon derivation. This seems to have been done purposely, in order that, if any of the congregation, especially the less educated, should not understand the one term, he should catch the meaning of the other. In the early prayers of the 'Morning Service,' we have: 'We *pray* and *beseech* thee.' We also find 'We *acknowledge* and *confess*,' '*sins* and *wickedness*;' '*goodness* and *mercy*;' '*dissemble* nor *cloak*;' '*assemble* and *meet together*;' '*requisite* and *necessary*;' '*erred* and *strayed*;' '*pardoneth* and *ab-solveth*,' and many others.

Certain writers on the English language have strongly objected to the lately-introduced practice of forming participial adjectives from nouns; especially in the case of the two words 'talented' and 'gifted.' As well, say they, might we call a man 'wisdomed,' 'geniused,' or 'knowledged.' Coleridge, arguing against the admission of the word 'talented' into English, says: 'only imagine other participles so formed, and conceive a man being said to be 'pennied,' 'shillinged,' and 'pounded!' But though we do not yet use these latter terms, Coleridge seems to have forgotten that we very commonly speak of a 'moneyed' man; and there is very little doubt that these adjectives have struck too deep root in the language to be easily eradicated.

The word '*reliable*,' a comparatively late introduction, is another of those against which the purists have raised a loud outcry. They argue that as we do not rely a man, but rely *on* a man, therefore the word, if used at all, should be '*reliable*,' and not '*reliable*.' But here is one of the many cases in which philosophy must give way to custom; and, in spite of the above objection, this word is too firmly fixed in the language to be easily driven out. The real difference between '*reliable*' and '*trustworthy*' is, that the former applies more properly to things, such as news, information, &c., and the latter to persons. A '*trustworthy*' messenger would probably bring us '*reliable*' information. But, whatever concession we may make in the case of '*reliable*,' we should resist, with all our might, the introduction of '*reliability*.'

Certain laws of transformation are found to operate in the Romance languages. One of these is, that Latin or Italian words beginning with *f* appear in Spanish with an *h* initial. Thus '*filius*,' '*figlio*' (a son), is, in Spanish, '*hijo*.' By the same law the Latin '*femina*' (a woman) becomes, in Spanish '*hembra*,' '*formosus*' (beautiful) is '*hermoso*,' '*Fabulari*,' Italian '*favellare*' (to talk) is, in Spanish, '*hablar*.' '*Faba*' (a bean) is, in Spanish, '*haba*.' The Latin '*Facere*,' Italian '*fare*' (to do), becomes '*hacer*,' *filum* (thread) is '*hilo*,' and *folium* (a leaf) '*hoja*,' &c.

The Spanish word 'hidalgo' (a nobleman) is a contraction of 'hijo d'algo' (filius alicujus), literally 'the son of somebody,' i.e., of importance.

It may also be observed that the combination *ct* in Latin is found in Italian *tt* (or *t*), and in Spanish *ch*. This may be seen in the following cases:—

Lat.	Ital.	Span.	Lat.	Ital.	Span.
Factus . .	fatto . .	hecho	Dictus . .	detto . .	dicho
Sanctus . .	santo . .	sancho	Directus .	diritto .	derecho

Again, *pl* in Latin becomes *pi* in Italian and *ll* in Spanish, as in the following:—

Lat.	Ital.	Span.	Lat.	Ital.	Span.
Planus . .	piano . .	llano	Pluvia . .	piova . .	lluvia
Plenus . .	pieno . .	lleno	Planctus .	pianto .	llanto

Affinities also exist between certain letters of the alphabet; and this relationship may be often seen in words transferred from one language to another. For example, the labials, or lip-letters, are frequently interchanged. Many English words beginning with an *F* are derived from Latin (or French) words having a *P* initial. This is exemplified in the following list:—

Latin.	French.	German.	English.
Pater . . .	père . . .	Vater . . .	father
Piscis . . .	poisson . .	Fisch . . .	fish
Pes-pedis .	pied . . .	Fuss . . .	foot
Paucus . . .	peu . . .	— . . .	few
Per . . . .	pour . . .	für . . .	for
Pellis . . .	peau . . .	Fell . . .	fell
Pullus . . .	poule . . .	Vogel . . .	fowl
Pugnus . . .	poignée . .	Faust . . .	fist, &c.

Another affinity may be observed between *G* and *W*. Many French words beginning with a *G* guttural represent that letter in English by a *W*. This may be seen in the following cases :—

French.	English.	French.	English.
<i>gages</i> . . .	<i>wages</i>	<i>guède</i> . . .	<i>woad</i>
<i>gagner</i> . . .	<i>win</i>	<i>guèpe</i> . . .	<i>wasp</i>
<i>Galles</i> . . .	<i>Wales</i>	<i>guerdon</i> . . .	<i>(re)ward</i>
<i>garant</i> . . .	<i>warrant</i>	<i>guerre</i> . . .	<i>war</i>
<i>gare</i> . . .	<i>be(ware)</i>	<i>guetter</i> . . .	<i>wait</i>
<i>garde</i> . . .	<i>ward</i>	<i>gueule</i> . . .	<i>well</i>
<i>garenne</i> . . .	<i>warren</i>	<i>guichet</i> . . .	<i>wicket</i>
<i>gâter</i> . . .	<i>waste</i>	<i>Guillaume</i> . . .	<i>William</i>
<i>Gaultier</i> . . .	<i>Walter</i>	<i>guise</i> . . .	<i>(like)wise</i>
<i>gaufre</i> . . .	<i>wafer</i>		

This connection between the *G* and *W* may be also seen at the end of many English compared with German words.

German.	English.	German.	English.
<i>Sorge</i> . . .	<i>sorrow</i>	<i>biegen</i> . . .	<i>bow</i>
<i>Folgen</i> . . .	<i>follow</i>	<i>heiligen</i> . . .	<i>hallow</i>
<i>morgen</i> . . .	<i>morrow</i>	<i>tragen</i> . . .	<i>draw</i>
<i>borgen</i> . . .	<i>borrow</i>	<i>legen</i> . . .	<i>law, &amp;c.</i>

A relationship is also to be seen between *C* guttural and *H* aspirate. The *C* hard initial in the Romance languages is represented in the Teutonic by an *H*. For example :—

Latin.	French.	German.	English.
<i>canis</i> . . .	<i>chien</i> . . .	<i>Hund</i> . . .	<i>hound</i>
<i>collis</i> . . .	<i>colline</i> . . .	<i>Hügel</i> . . .	<i>hill</i>
<i>centum</i> . . .	<i>cent</i> . . .	<i>hundert</i> . . .	<i>hundred</i>
<i>cor</i> . . .	<i>cœur</i> . . .	<i>Herz</i> . . .	<i>heart</i>

Latin.	French.	German.	English.
<i>casa</i> . . .	<i>chez</i> . . .	<i>Haus</i> . . .	<i>house</i>
<i>cornu</i> . . .	<i>cor</i> . . .	<i>Horn</i> . . .	<i>horn</i>
<i>cannabis</i> . .	<i>chanvre</i> . .	<i>Hanf</i> . . .	<i>hemp</i>
<i>carpo</i> . . .	— . . .	<i>Herbst</i> . .	<i>harvest</i>
<i>calx</i> . . .	— . . .	<i>Hiel</i> . . .	<i>heel</i>
<i>cutis</i> . . .	— . . .	<i>Haut</i> . . .	<i>hide, &amp;c.</i>

This connection between *c* (or *k*) and *h* appears in other cases. A primitive English word ending in a guttural (*g* or *k*) often produces derivatives in which the guttural is softened into *tch*, as in :—

<i>make</i> . . .	<i>match</i>	<i>wreck</i> . . .	<i>wretch</i>
<i>wake</i> . . .	<i>watch</i>	<i>dig</i> . . .	<i>ditch</i>
<i>bake</i> . . .	<i>batch</i>	<i>stick</i> . . .	<i>stitch</i>
<i>flake</i> . . .	<i>fitch</i>	<i>crook</i> . . .	<i>crutch, &amp;c.</i>

Some of our English pronouns have this ending (*ch*), where it is a contraction of the word ‘like.’

Thus :—

	Scottish.	Saxon.	English.
who-like . .	<i>whilk</i> . . .	<i>hwlyc</i> . . .	<i>which</i>
all-like . .	<i>ilk</i> . . .	<i>ælc</i> . . .	<i>each</i>
so-like . .	<i>solch</i> (Germ.)	<i>swyle</i> . . .	<i>such, &amp;c.</i>

Another phenomenon of a certain class of words is the use of an initial *s*, to give them an intensive meaning. This may be observed in the following cases :—

<i>knap</i> . . .	<i>snap</i>	<i>deep</i> . . .	<i>steep</i>
<i>lash</i> . . .	<i>slash</i>	<i>nip</i> . . .	<i>snip</i>
<i>mash</i> . . .	<i>smash</i>	<i>rip</i> . . .	<i>strip</i>
<i>plash</i> . . .	<i>splash</i>	<i>din</i> . . .	<i>stun</i>
<i>quash</i> . . .	<i>squash</i>	<i>pike</i> . . .	<i>spike</i>

lack . . . slack	wipe . . . sweep
lain . . . slain	light . . . slight
lay . . . slay	pout . . . spout
melt . . . smelt	hoot . . . shout
meet . . . smite	rub . . . scrub
reach . . . stretch	tumble . . . stumble
well . . . swell	cut . . . scud

A large class of English words beginning with *s* followed by a consonant are derived from French, where they are spelled with an *e* or *es* initial; as :—

French.	English.	French.	English.
écarlate . .	scarlet	espion . .	spy
échafaud . .	scaffold	épinard . .	spinach
échantillon .	scantling	épine . .	spine
écharfe . .	scarf	esprit . .	spirit
espace . .	space	écrivain . .	scrivener
étrange . .	strange	échorcher .	scorch
escadron . .	squadron	école . .	school
esclave . .	slave	éponge . .	sponge
étage . .	stage	époux . .	spouse
état . .	state	estomac . .	stomach
étendard . .	standard	étroit . .	strait
espèce . .	species		

According to some French philologists, when the *s* in any of these French words is pronounced, it is a sign that the word is of later introduction.

It may be observed of the letter *h* (initial) that it is never mute in Germanic words, and that whenever it is mute in English, the word is of French derivation.



Thus we have :—

French (mute).	German (aspirate).
Honneur . . honour	hart . . . hard
Héritier . . heir	Herz . . . heart
Honnête . . honest	Heide . . heath
Heure . . . hour	Hitze . . heat
Humeur . . humour	Hoffnung . hope, &c.

The *h* initial was prefixed to many Saxon words where it has now disappeared from the English. This was chiefly before the liquids *l*, *n*, and *r*.

Saxon.	English.	Saxon.	English.
Hlaf . . . loaf		Hnecca . . neck	
Hlaford . . lord		Hnægan . . neigh	
Hrafn . . raven		Hnut . . nut	
Hlædl . . ladle		Hlud . . loud	
Hleopan . leap		Hring . . ring	
Hlædan . . lead		Hlosian . . lose, &c.	

The German *z* initial often corresponds with the English *t*; as:—

German.	English.	German.	English.
zahlen . . . tell		zu . . . to	
zahn . . . tame		Zoll . . . toll	
Zahn . . . tooth		Zunge . . tongue	
zehn . . . ten		Zug . . . tug	
zerren . . tear		Zweig . . twig	
Zinn . . . tin		Zwilling . twin	
Zimmer . . timber		zwischen . (be)tween	
Zeit . . . tide		zwölf . . twelve, &c.	

The German *t* initial corresponds with the English *d*; as:—

German.	English.	German.	English.
Tag . . . day		Teufel . . devil	
Tändeln . . dandle		Thal . . . dale	

German.	English.	German.	English.
<i>Tanz</i> . . .	<i>dance</i>	<i>That</i> . . .	<i>deed</i>
<i>Taub</i> . . .	<i>deaf</i>	<i>Thau</i> . . .	<i>dew</i>
<i>Taube</i> . . .	<i>dove</i>	<i>Theil</i> . . .	<i>deal</i>
<i>Tauch</i> . . .	<i>duck</i>	<i>Thier</i> . . .	<i>deer</i>
<i>Teich</i> . . .	<i>dough</i>	<i>Thun</i> . . .	<i>do, &amp;c.</i>

Some are puzzled when to spell the ending 'ledge' and when 'lege.' The following rule may be easily remembered:—Monosyllables and the word 'acknowledge' are spelled with a *d*; therefore 'ledge,' 'fledge,' 'pledge,' 'sedg,' 'sledge,' and 'acknowledge' retain that letter; whereas 'sacri-lege,' 'privilege,' 'allege,' and 'college' must reject it.

Some years ago, there was a sharp controversy concerning the spelling of the word—whether it should be '*rein-deer*' or '*rain-deer*.' The dictionaries differed, many even giving both forms. It was found in Johnson '*rain-deer*,' which of course settled the dispute. In spite of this decision, there is no doubt that the word is generally spelled '*rein-deer*.' The Saxon form was '*hrana-deor*,' i.e. 'the running animal.'

Some lament that we have adopted the French form of the word '*programme*.' They say that by analogy it ought to be written '*program*.' We have '*anagram*,' '*diagram*,' '*epigram*,' &c.; and why not '*program*?' But the former is now the established spelling; and, till some daring innovator

adopt the new form, and his example be generally followed, we must be content to use the old one.

A few years ago, a new word was wanted to express 'a message sent by the telegraph;' various forms were suggested, but at last the word 'telegram' was adopted. This was another argument in favour of 'program.'

The verb 'to repair,' in the sense of 'to make better' or 'to improve,' is from the Latin 'reparare,' through the French 'reparer;' but when it means 'to go back home' it is from the Latin 'repatriare,' to return to your country.

The second syllable in 'impair' is in no way connected with the above. 'Impair' is from the French '*empirer*,' 'to make worse.'

## CHAPTER XV.

GENERAL REMARKS ON WORDS, ETC.—*continued*.

IN the periodical and light literature of the day, we frequently meet with forms of language which have been expressively called ‘slipshod English.’ These are of various kinds—uncertain reference, superfluous words, incompatible terms, ungrammatical forms, &c. &c.

Of the first class may be quoted the tailor’s advertisement, in which it was stated that ‘Gentlemen’s materials are made up, and waited on at their own houses,’ where there is a glorious uncertainty as to who or what may be waited on.

The following is of the same nature:—In an examination in the House of Commons, in 1809, a member said that ‘the witness had been ordered to withdraw from the bar, in consequence of being intoxicated by the motion of an honourable member.’ The word ‘intoxicated’ was here, per-

haps, the right word ; but it was certainly not in the right place.

A word is often written which has no function to perform in the sentence, and therefore no business on the paper. These are superfluous words ; they occupy space, but, instead of assisting, they rather clog the sense of the passage. The often-used expression, 'final completion,' is a case in point. Every 'completion' is 'final ;' the idea of 'final' is involved in the word 'completion,' and therefore this is a wrong expression.

Another of these superabundant forms is where we find 'universal' and 'all' brought into the same construction. A man is sometimes said to be 'universally' beloved by 'all' his friends. Here either 'universally' or 'all' should be taken out. If the love for him is 'universal,' of course 'all' love him ; and the converse is equally true.

Sometimes words are found together which contradict each other. Of this class of faults we may quote the not unfrequent form 'further backwards.' 'Further' means more in advance, and 'backwards' has a directly contrary meaning. It is impossible to go 'further' and, at the same time, 'backwards,' and therefore the two words should never be used together.

'Either' and 'neither' cannot be properly applied to more than two persons or things. Speaking

of three or four people, it is incorrect to say that 'neither' of them is clever, though we may say that 'none,' or 'no one,' of them is clever. Nor would it be good grammar to say, 'either of the six children may go;' we must here say 'any one.'

'*All of them.*' This is a form which some critics have attacked, and not without reason. They say that '*of*' here means 'out of;' that it corresponds exactly with the Latin preposition *e*, or *ex*, and that therefore the expression must be incorrect. We do not take 'all of them,' but we take 'them all.' We may correctly say one, two, three, &c., or most of them, but when there is question of *all*, no preposition should be used.

'*Equanimity of mind.*' As equanimity means evenness of mind, why should 'of mind' be repeated? 'Anxiety of mind' is, of course, open to the same objection.

'*Incorrect orthography.*' The fault in this very common expression arises from the idea that 'orthography' means merely spelling (good or bad), whereas the true meaning of the word is '*correct spelling.*' Now, spelling cannot be correct and at the same time incorrect, and therefore the two terms are incompatible. We may say 'incorrect spelling,' but we must not say 'incorrect orthography.'

'*A confirmed invalid.*' What is this? one who



is strengthened in his weakness? There is certainly here a contradiction, for no weakness can be strong.

'*Old news*' is another contradictory form, where the terms are incompatible with each other. It may be placed in the same class with 'enjoying bad health.'

It is inaccurate to say that a man's '*defects are improved.*' A defect means the want of some good quality, and to 'improve' means 'to make better.' Wants may be 'decreased' or 'supplied,' but they cannot be made better; and, therefore, the two terms should not be used together.

It is a common error to use 'quantity' for 'number.' The former can only be said of a collection or mass. A 'quantity' of meat or a 'quantity' of milk is good English, but not a quantity of pens or books, &c. To separate individual objects we must apply 'number,' but to a collected mass 'quantity.' We may say a 'quantity' of wood, but it must be a 'number' of faggots.

In many cases the wrong preposition is used; and, indeed, there are few writers or speakers who are invariably correct in this respect. The very common fault, 'different to,' we need hardly stop to inquire into, but we often find equally wrong forms which pass unnoticed. Occasionally we meet with 'to disagree *from*,' though in general

the form used is 'to disagree *with*.' Here the 'dis' in 'disagree' and the preposition 'with' seem to pull two ways. Which, then, is right—to disagree *from* or *with*? The proper phrase is to 'assent *to*' and to 'dissent *from*;' and if the latter is correct, why not also 'to disagree *from*?'

As it is admitted that 'different *to*' is wrong, on the same principle, 'averse *to*' must be wrong. No one can go two ways at once. The *a* in 'averse' certainly means 'from;' and therefore the word should be followed by '*from*,' and not '*to*.' The first is already adopted by many good writers.

The conjunction 'than' should not be used except after a comparative adjective. 'Sooner than;' 'better than;' 'rather than,' &c., are correct; but 'scarcely had he uttered these words *than*,' is bad English. 'Hardly had he attained his majority *than*' is equally wrong. For '*than*' we should here use '*when*.' 'But' should not be used for 'than,' as, 'no sooner had he finished his work *but*.'

Another common mistake is to use 'except' for 'unless.' The former is a preposition, and must be followed not by a proposition, but by a noun or pronoun. It is bad grammar to say 'no one should aspire to this situation, *except* he is competent to fulfil its duties.' (Here, we should read 'unless' for 'except'.)

‘Like’ is also frequently confounded with ‘as.’ The former is a preposition, and should not be used as a conjunction. ‘Do you write *like* I do?’ is wrong. It should be ‘*as* (not *like*) I do.’

‘Notwithstanding he thought so,’ is bad English. We should here use ‘although.’ ‘Notwithstanding’ is a preposition, and is followed by its object. We say correctly, ‘notwithstanding his objections,’ but not properly, ‘notwithstanding he objected.’

‘But’ is often redundant after the word ‘doubt.’ We continually meet with ‘I have no doubt *but* that,’ &c. This is a wrong form : the ‘but’ should be omitted.

As an example of a loose sentence ; i.e. where the connection of the parts is not sufficiently clear, the following advertisement of a hair-dresser may be quoted :—

‘Seven lessons in hair-dressing may be had for one guinea, which (?) *being imparted on a system* entirely new, will enable any one *so instructed* to give the most complete satisfaction !’

The Anglo-Saxon ‘*tíd*’ meant ‘time’ (compare the German ‘*Zeit*’) ; whence to ‘betide’ means to happen in time. The ‘tide’ is the *time* at which the water rises and falls. ‘Tidy,’ also, in old English, signified properly ‘timely.’

In old English, we meet with the form ‘ton,’ which is for ‘the one ;’ and this may probably

account for 't'other,' or 'the t'other,' which is, in fact, a contraction of 'that other.' But 't'other' is now accounted a vulgarism.

There is some difference of practice in the use of the article (a, an). The rule is, that 'an' must be used before a vowel, or *h* mute. This is, in general, a good rule; but there is one vowel, which must be sometimes considered an exception, viz. '*u*.' It is right to say 'an apple,' 'an evil,' 'an idler,' and 'an orange;' but before *u* we must pause; for here there is a double practice. Now, this vowel has two sounds; open, as in '*union*;' and close, as in '*ugly*.' Before the long sound, we should use the article '*a*;' as '*a unit*,' '*a union*,' *a uniform*, &c. But before the short sound of '*u*,' the article '*an*' should be used; as '*an uncle*,' '*an ugly object*,' &c. Many good writers, however, use '*an*' even before a long *u*. We often meet with '*an united family*,' '*an universal practice*,' &c. The question is here one of harmony; and the best practice seems to be, to adopt the softer sound. No one ever thinks of saying or writing '*an youth*,' or '*an yew tree*;' and yet the sound in '*an uniform*,' or '*an universe*,' is precisely the same, and of course equally harsh.

Another case belonging to this question is the use of the article in the frequently-seen expression

*'such an one.'* This form is disagreeably harsh and unmusical. We might as well say: *'such an woman,'* or *'such an wonder.'* It is true there are authorities for both these forms—*'such a one,'* and *'such an one;'* but in a case of this sort, we had better adopt the more harmonious form; good taste and a delicate ear will direct us to *'such a one,'* rather than *'such an one.'*

It has been remarked that there is a strong tendency in English to get rid of inflections. Many of these were found in old English which have now fallen off. The old infinitive-ending *en* is now altogether gone, though some adjectives in *en* still remain; viz. those which denote material, such as *'golden,' 'earthen,' 'oaten,' &c.* We had at one time *'rosen,' 'silvern,' 'tinnen,' 'boxen,'* and many others. These are now gone; and there seems to be a prevalent disposition to cut off the endings of those which remain. Instead of *'a golden watch,'* we now say *'a gold watch,'* using the noun for the adjective. In the same way, we have *'earthworks'* for *'earthen works;'* though we still keep *'earthenware.'* Many of these adjectives in *en* still hold their ground, though most of those which are retained have lost a part of their sense. *'Brazen'* has now only a secondary meaning; and stands for *'bold'* or *'impudent.'* In a concrete sense, the noun is used instead of

the adjective. We say a 'brazen face,' for an 'impudent face;' but 'a brass knob,' or 'a brass candlestick.' Again: we have 'a golden rule,' in a secondary; but a 'gold' ring in a primary sense.

The word 'pigmy'—derived from the Greek *πυγμα*, the fist—was first spelled 'pygmy.' It meant one whose stature was no higher than from the elbow to the fist. The change from *y* to *i* was probably caused by the dislike of the printers to *y* in the middle of a word. But it has here as good a right to its place as the *y* in 'hymn,' or 'type.' It is, however, gone; and we must submit.

Hundreds of words might be cited which have been brought into their present forms by the influence of corruption. The now generally received explanation of 'Rotten Row' is, that it is a corruption of 'Route du Roi,' originally the private road used by King William III. when going from Piccadilly to Kensington. The old form 'diamant' was preferable to the more modern 'diamond,' because it told its story more clearly. It was an inversion of 'adamant,' the untameable, or invincible, so called because it is the hardest of stones, and cannot be cut except by one of its own species.

The modern spelling of the word 'height' is a corruption. We have 'width,' from 'wide;'



'length,' from 'long;' and 'breadth,' from 'broad.' Why, then, not 'highth,' from 'high?' In the writings of the seventeenth century we meet with various spellings of this word. It is found 'highth' in the first edition of 'Paradise Lost;' and also 'heighth' and 'heygth.' Now the inversion of *ht* for *th* has corrupted it into 'height;' and so, for the present, it will probably remain. The *d* in 'admiral' appears to be a corruption. All our dictionaries give the derivation of this word from the Arabic 'amir,' or 'emir,' a lord, or commander. Neither the French 'amiral,' nor the Italian 'ammiraglio,' has the *d*. Milton writes the word 'ammiral:'

the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great *ammiral*,—

though in this passage, the word means a ship, and not its commander. Mr. Wedgewood says that, in many cases in Arabic, the article is placed after the noun; and that the *ad* initial is a mere corruption of the first syllable of 'amir' or 'emir.'

It was a fanciful etymology which gave us the word 'Tartar.' The incorrect spelling 'Tartars' for 'Tatars' occurs at the same time with the appearance of the Mongols in Europe, in the thirteenth century; and was probably introduced

by the superstitious monks and writers who, struck with the seeming analogy between 'Tatar' and Tartarus (the hell of the ancients), believed that these ferocious invaders had come from the infernal regions.

We are told by some writers that there are between 2,000 and 3,000 words in the English language, for which there is no recognised standard of spelling. Though this number is probably exaggerated, there are, no doubt, many in this condition; and it naturally becomes a question which of two forms is to be preferred. Here, we should be at least consistent; we should hold to the one, and altogether reject the other.

The two forms, 'chemist' and 'chymist' arose from the word having a disputed derivation; but the first is now received as correct. Of course, its derivatives will therefore be spelled 'chemical,' 'chemistry,' &c.

There was, at one time, a confusion between 'choir' and 'quire.' The second word has no connection, except in sound, with the first, which is from the Latin 'chorus,' through the French 'chœur.' As 'quire,' in the sense of a number singing together, is now obsolete, so is 'quirister,' which must be spelled 'chorister.'

There are two forms—'coit,' and 'quoit.' The derivation of this word is somewhat obscure; but

if, as some suggest, it is connected with *cut*, the form 'coit' is preferable to the other. Another argument in favour of this form is that the word is always pronounced as if beginning with a *c* hard, or *k*; and not as if with *qu*.

There has been a rather sharp controversy lately concerning the two forms 'diocess' and 'diocese.' The 'Times' adopts 'diocess.' Dr. Latham says under the word, 'diocese, frequently but improperly, diocess.' Webster says, 'the orthography of "diocess" is opposed to the derivation, and is against the best English usage.' There is little doubt that 'diocess' is the older, and 'diocese' the newer form of the word: and there is also little doubt, in spite of the 'Times,' that 'diocese' is the proper form.

Between 'intire' and 'entire' there is still a divided practice. The word is a contraction of the Latin 'integer,' which will account for the initial *i*. But it comes to us directly from the French 'entier.' So that 'entire' will probably supplant 'intire,' though we still have 'Barclay and Co.'s *intire*.'

There are two forms of the word—'referrible,' and 'referable.' These are both in common use, and both are given in the dictionaries; but the second, 'referable,' is the proper form. There was no Latin adjective 'referibilis.' Our word is

a later formation, where *a* in such cases is always used rather than *i*; and, therefore, it is better spelled 'referable.' Besides, this form is in analogy with 'preferable,' 'inferable,' &c.

Some still write 'sirname' incorrectly for 'surname,' probably from an idea that the word means sire-name, or a name received from a sire (father). But its real meaning is an added name; one name added *to* another. It is from the French 'surnom,' and should be always spelled 'surname.'

Between a 'serjeant'-at-law, and a military 'sergeant' there is this difference: that the first must be written with a *j*, and the second with a *g*. The word is derived from the Latin 'serviens,' and means, in both cases, one who serves; but the words are spelled somewhat differently, to make a distinction in their application.

A difference should be made between 'story' and 'storey.' The first means an account of facts, and is a contraction of 'history.' It is a history on a small scale. But 'storey' is a contraction of 'stagery,' and means the landing in a house; as in 'first storey,' 'second storey,' &c. Of course, the plural form of the first word should be 'stories,' and of the second, 'storeys.'

## CHAPTER XVI.

## MISCELLANEOUS DERIVATIONS OF WORDS.

**ABOMINABLE.** This word is from the Latin verb 'abominor,' which again is from *ab* and *omen*. The word involves the idea of what is in a religious sense profane and detestable; in fine, of evil omen. Milton always uses it in reference to devilish, profane or idolatrous objects. It was once thought that the true etymology of 'abominable' was from *ab* (from), and *homo* (a man); and that its proper meaning was *repugnant to human nature*. This, though not the right derivation, may account for the word being still often used in that sense.

*Absurd*, which has the sense of 'foolish,' 'inconsistent,' &c., is from the Latin 'absurdus,' compounded of 'ab' (from), and 'surdus' (deaf). An 'absurd' answer is one you would probably get 'from a deaf' man; i.e. one wholly irrelevant to the question.

*Academy.* This word owes its origin to the name of a grove near Athens, ἀκαδημία, where Plato and other philosophers used to give lectures to their followers. Hence this name has been frequently given to institutions for instruction.

*Ajar.* The Anglo-Saxon ‘cerre’ is a turn; from ‘cerran,’ to turn; hence a door is said to be ‘ajar,’ when it is on the turn. From the same root we have to *churn* milk; i.e. to *turn* it about. Also a *char*-woman—one who does a ‘turn’ of work. Compare the German ‘kehren.’

*Archipelago.* This name was given by the modern Greeks to the Ægean Sea. It is a corruption of ἅγιος πέλαγος (Hagios pelagos), ‘Holy Sea.’

*Ban,* to proclaim or denounce. The original meaning is connected with ‘*banner*,’ a flag, or standard; in feudal times, the rallying point to which retainers flocked to do battle for their seigneur. The word is supposed to be connected with ‘*bend*,’ in the sense of to make a sign. ‘*Bandit*,’ a proclaimed outlaw, is from the same source, as also ‘*Banns*,’ i.e. a proclamation of marriage.

*Bankrupt.* The following circumstances gave rise to this word. It was the custom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the Lombard merchants to expose their wares for sale in the market-place,



on *benches*. Whenever any one of their number failed in his business, or could not pay his debts, all the other merchants set upon him, drove him from the market, and *broke* his *bench* to pieces. 'Banco rotto' is the Italian for bench-broken. Hence came the word, which passed into French in the form '*banqueroute*;' and into English as '*bankrupt*.'

*Barley-sugar*. Has nothing whatever to do with the grain '*barley*.' The first part of the word is here an inversion—and at the same time a corruption of the French *brûlé* (burnt). The whole word was originally '*sucré brûlé*' (burnt sugar), and it is still sometimes called 'sugar-barley.'

*Birmingham*. The name of an Anglo-Saxon family was often formed by adding *ing* to that of its founder; *ing* meaning 'son of,' or 'descended from.' The estate or residence was called the '*ham*,' or home; and the name was formed by adding this syllable *ham*, to the family name. Thus, the family of a Saxon leader named 'Beorm' possessed a residence in Mercia, to which they gave the name of 'Beorm-ing-ham,' or the home of the sons of Beorm; now corrupted into 'Birmingham.' Many places in England still retain the names originally given them by Anglo-Saxon families; as 'Nottingham,' 'Walsingham,' &c.

*Blackguard* was a name first given to the lowest menials engaged in the dirty work of a kitchen or household, as scullion, link-boy, coal-carrier, &c. It was afterwards applied to any loose, idle vagabonds.

*Book*. In the same way as the Latin *liber* (the bark of a tree), was afterwards used in the sense of a book, because it was a material used for writing on; so our word *book* comes from the Saxon 'boc' (a beech tree). In a rude, uncivilised age, it was the custom to form alphabetical letters with the pliable twigs of the beech. To this day, the German for 'to spell' is 'buchstabiren' (from 'Buch' (beech), and 'stab' (a staff or twig); i.e. to put the beech-staves properly together.

*Booty*. The Anglo-Saxon 'bet' meant 'better'; and 'betan' was to amend or make better. Thus a 'booty' would be that which betters us; 'bootless' is 'without effect or improvement,' and 'so much to boot,' is so much to our advantage.

*Burglar*. This is from the Low Latin 'burglato,' a house-robber; one who breaks into a house with a felonious intent. The old French 'lerre' is a contraction of the Latin 'latro,' a robber.

*Cabal*. The usually received etymology of this word is that it is formed of the initials of the names of the five ministers of Charles II. who

succeeded to the government of this country after the banishment of Lord Clarendon—Clifford, Ashley, Buckingham, Arlington, and Lauderdale. But Mr. Wedgewood suggests that it comes from ‘Cabala,’ or the mysterious tradition delivered to Moses with the Law, on Mount Sinai, and handed down by the Jews from father to son. ‘Hence,’ he says, ‘Cabal came to signify a secret machination or plotting.’ Lord Macaulay favours the first explanation.

*Caitiff*. This English word presents us with a curious lesson. It is, in fact, only another form of ‘captive,’ though it has come to signify a wretch capable of perpetrating the darkest crimes. The Latin ‘captive,’ a prisoner, is the source of the modern Italian ‘cattivo,’ which has the general sense of ‘bad;’ and the French ‘chétif,’ which signifies ‘mean,’ ‘pitiful,’ or ‘insignificant,’ is another form of the same word. All these varieties point to the same conclusion, viz. the moral degradation naturally produced in the human mind by captivity.

*Candidate*. In ancient Rome it was the custom for those who sued for offices of state, to be dressed in white robes. Hence came the word ‘candidate,’ which is derived from the Latin ‘candidus’ (white); and which signifies literally—‘dressed in white.’

*Carat* is from the Arabic 'kaura,' a bean, which varies very little in weight. It was introduced into India as a standard weight for diamonds. The Arabic words are *goort*, *girat*, and *gurat*; corrupted into '*carat*.'

*Cardinal.* Certain dignitaries of the Church of Rome are called 'cardinals.' This word is derived from the Latin '*cardo*,' a hinge. One of the favourite comparisons by which the Church of Rome sought to set herself up above all the other churches of Christendom, was that it was the *hinge* upon which all the rest of the church, as the door, turned, or depended. Hence the higher clergy were called cardinals, as being closely connected with the Pope, who was the '*cardo*,' or hinge of them all. Certain virtues are also called '*cardinal*,' as being those upon which all other virtues turn.

*Caricature.* This is literally an overloaded or over-charged representation. It is derived from the Italian '*caricare*,' to load. In a caricature, a resemblance is retained; but the details are exaggerated.

*Carnival* is from the Latin '*caro*' (flesh), and '*vale*' (farewell). It signifies literally 'farewell to flesh;' and is applied to the holiday held in Roman Catholic countries the week before Lent. It may be considered as a feast before a fast.

*Cauldle.* The derivation of this word is yet undecided. Latham gives it as a corruption of 'cordial;' while Wedgewood derives it from the French 'chaudeau' (from *chaud*, hot), a warm comforting drink for the sick.

*Chancel.* This means the part of a church enclosed or railed off from the body of the building by lattice-work (Latin, *cancelli*). Chancellors were originally law officers who stood at the railings (ad cancellos) in a court of justice, and received the petitions of the suitors. The verb 'to cancel' is from the same source. To 'cancel' a name is to efface it by drawing a pen across it in diagonal lines, so as to make lattice-work over it.

*Cheat.* From the Latin verb 'cadere,' to fall, came the old French 'eschoir,' and hence 'escheats.' This is a law-term signifying lands which *fall* to the lord by forfeiture, or by the death of a tenant. The king's 'escheators' were officers appointed to look after the king's 'escheats;' and as they had many opportunities of practising fraud, and were much complained of on that score, the term escheator (or cheater) came to signify any fraudulent person. This is the origin of the present meaning of the verb 'to cheat.'

*Church.* This word, though consisting of only one syllable, has in it the elements of two roots.

It is of Greek origin, and signifies literally 'the Lord's House.' *Κύριος* (*Kyrios*) is the Greek for 'Lord;' and *οἶκος* (*oikos*) means, in that language, 'house,' or 'dwelling.' Putting these two roots together we get '*Kyri-oik.*' This, by a natural law would contract into 'kyrik.' In Scotch we find 'kirk,' and in German 'Kirche.' In English the guttural is softened, and the word appears as '*church.*'

*Comedy.* This is derived, according to Aristotle, from *κώμη* (*komē*), a village; and *ὀδὴ* (*odē*), a song. It was at first a song of joy of the villagers at the gathering in of the harvest—a sort of harvest-home. This was a lighter and gayer song, and did not partake of the more solemn, and at first, religious tone of the tragedy. Others derive comedy from *κῶμος*, and *ὀδὴ*, 'a song of revellers.'

*Companion.* Two derivations are given of this word. 1. From the French '*campagne*,' which is from the Latin '*cum*,' and '*pagus*' a village, or district. By this explanation it would mean one of those who belonged to the same district. 2. From the Low Latin '*companionum*,' an association; formed from '*cum*' (with), and '*panis*' (bread). This conveys the meaning of bread-sharer. Mr. Wedgewood favours the second explanation.



*Comrade.* There is no doubt that this word, which is in French 'camarade,' is derived from the Italian 'camera,' afterwards in French 'chambre,' and that it was first applied to those who lived together in the same room (chambre).

*Cordwainer.* During the Moorish government of southern Spain, the city of Cordöva became celebrated for the manufacture of leather. Hence, the French 'cordovan' meant originally the leather of Cordova. Hence, also, the English 'cordwainer,' and the French 'cordovanier' (now contracted into 'cordonnier,') a worker in leather.

*Counterpane.* The middle-age Latin 'culcita' meant a mattrass. This in French was 'coulte,' and in English became 'quilt.' 'Culcita puncta' meant a quilt punctured with stitches, so as to form a pattern. This, in French, became 'coulte-pointe;' afterwards converted into 'conte-pointe,' and 'contre-pointe.' Hence at length came the English 'counter-pane.'

*Country Dance.* Some think that this really means a dance of country people. But the probable derivation is the French *contre*, 'over against,' or 'opposite to,' which has been corrupted into 'country;' and the whole word means a dance in which the partners stand opposite to (contre) each other.

*Curmudgeon.* It was suggested by Menage

that this word is from the French 'cœur,' and 'méchant,' wicked heart. But the more probable derivation is from 'corn-mudgin.' Corn-mudgins were dealers in corn, who were unpopular, as it was thought that they hoarded, and kept up the price of corn, to serve their own interests. Hence the word came to signify an avaricious monopolist.

*Delirious* comes from the Latin compound 'de' (from), and 'lira' (a furrow, or ridge). The word is a metaphor, taken from those who deviate from the straight line, or furrow, in ploughing. It is now applied to those who rove in mind, or are disordered in intellect.

*Ecstasy*. This word has the meaning of violent excitement. It is now generally used in the sense of some pleasurable feeling, though it was formerly much more extended in signification. It is derived from the Greek *ἐκ* (out), and *στάσις* (a standing); i.e. literally 'a standing out.' It is curious that in the Saxon part of our language, there is a corresponding phrase which exactly explains this word; viz. 'to be beside oneself.' We commonly say, 'He was beside himself with joy.' In a state of 'ecstasy,' the soul may be said to leap out, as it were, and stand forth from the body.

*Fanatic* is from the Latin 'fanum,' a temple. This adjective was at first applied to people

affected by a strong religious feeling—possessed by an incontrollable enthusiasm.

*Favour.* Ladies in their most brilliant attire were generally spectators of the tournaments of the Middle Ages. They were, severally, interested in the knights, and encouraged them, by looks, tokens, or gestures, to do their duty manfully. They frequently threw them a portion of their dress, such as a sleeve, mantle, or bow of ribbons, called a *favour*, which the knight wore on his armour, and forfeited if he was vanquished. From this custom has descended, to our days, the fashion of distributing bows of ribbon, still called *favours*, to the guests and attendants at a wedding.

*Faubourg.* This is considered by French philologists, to be a corruption of '*forsbourg*.' The old French '*fors*' (now *hors*), is from the Latin '*foras*,' '*outside*,' or '*abroad*.' Faubourg (the present orthography) would naturally lead to the idea that it meant '*false town*,' or '*unreal town*:' whereas it means and literally corresponds with the English '*suburb*,' i.e. a district or place situated '*foras burgi*,' outside the town.

*Feud.* According to M. Guizot, the word '*feodum*' appears for the first time in a charter of Charles Le Gros, 884. The etymology is uncertain; but two suggestions have been made, either of

which is probable. Some think the word is connected with the Latin 'fides,' faith, and means 'land given,' for which the holder was bound in *fidelity* to his suzerain lord. According to others, 'feod' is of Germanic origin; and is derived from 'fe' (or fee)—still used in English in the sense of a recompense—and 'od' an old Germanic root now obsolete, meaning 'goods,' or 'property.' Thus, 'feod' would mean reward-land. M. Guizot favours the second explanation.

*Foolscap.* By a statute of Queen Anne certain duties were imposed on all paper imported from abroad. Among the various sorts of paper herein mentioned is the Genoa 'foolscap.' This word is a corruption of the Italian 'foglio capo,' a chief, or full-sized, sheet of paper. Foglio (leaf), is from the Latin 'folium,' which appears in French as 'feuille.'

*Garment* is a contraction of the French 'garment,' from the verb 'garnir,' to decorate or garnish. It is now restricted to the meaning of 'garnishing' or decorating the body by dress.

*Gew-gaw.* The derivation of this word still remains doubtful, though many suggestions have been made of its origin. May it not be from the French 'jou-jou,' a plaything?

*Gooseberry.* Dr. Johnson, whose etymologies are not always to be depended on, especially

those of Saxon words, explains the word 'gooseberry'—'a fruit eaten as a sauce for goose.' But it is, in truth, a corruption of the German 'kraus-beere,' or 'krautelbeere,' from 'kraus' or 'gorse,' 'crisp;' and the fruit is so called from the upright hairs with which it is covered. So that 'gooseberry,' is really, a corruption of 'gorseberry.' But what is gooseberry *fool*? 'Fool' is here also a corruption—it is from the French 'foulé,' 'mashed' or 'crushed,' and the whole word means 'crushed gooseberries.'

*Gossip.* 'Sib' was an Anglo-Saxon word, meaning 'relation,' and the term 'gossip' was first applied to the relation between godfathers and godmothers in baptism, so that a gossip (or God-sib), meant a relation in God (i.e. in a religious sense). It has now passed into the sense of a great chatterer or talker; but the above explanation accounts for its origin.

*Hammercloth.* In the olden time, before there was any hotel accommodation in England for travellers, it was the custom with those going on a journey to fill a 'hanaper' (or hamper) with provisions, and throw a cloth over it, to conceal its somewhat homely appearance. This was placed in front of the carriage, and served as a seat for the driver. Thus, from 'hanaper-cloth,' came 'hammer-cloth.'

*Harbour.* The two roots of this compound word are the Anglo-Saxon 'here,' an army; and 'beorgan,' to protect. A harbour is then, literally, a place to protect an army.

*Heir-loom.* From the Saxon 'geloma,' tools, utensils, or pieces of furniture. These in law are called personal chattels, and when they descended in inheritance from father to son, they were called 'heir-looms.'

*Homage* is derived from the French 'homme,' a man. The ceremony of 'homage' was, in the Middle Ages, a solemn declaration of the vassal that he would be the man (homme) of his future lord. He knelt down; placed both his hands between those of his lord; with his head bare, and without his arms; and then swore that he would use his hands and his weapons, when they should be restored to him, in his future lord's service.

*Hurry.* 'Here' was the Anglo-Saxon for an army (compare the German 'Heer'); and 'herian' was to act as an army, viz. to ravage, despoil, and plunder a country. Hence come the English words 'hurry,' 'harry,' and 'harrow.'

*Hustings* is from the Saxon 'Hus' (a house) and 'Ting' (a council). This was the name given to the municipal court of the City of London, where probably the elections were originally con-



ducted. Now, the word signifies the booths where speeches are made at an election.

*Jeopardy.* This is from the Middle-Age Latin; 'jocus partitus' (French, 'jeu-parti'), i.e. a divided game, where the chances are even—a choice of alternatives.

*Kickshaws* is a corruption of the French 'quelque chose;' *something* so disguised by cooking as scarcely to be recognised.

*Late* is from the Anglo-Saxon 'lætan;' to let, or allow. 'Lazy' is from the same root, as is also 'loiter.' He who 'loiters' must be 'late.'

*Lout.* This comes from the Anglo-Saxon verb 'lutian,' to bow. It was originally applied to a cringing menial, who was continually *bowing* before his master; and as in this case, the act was probably performed in a clownish, ungraceful way, the word thus came to signify an awkward, clumsy fellow.

*Menial.* This adjective is derived from the old French noun 'mesnie' (or meny), which, in the Middle Ages, meant the servants or household of some noble or chieftain taken collectively. A *menial* occupation was, originally, one performed by some member of the 'mesnie.' It is from this last that the English expression 'a many' is derived. It was at first 'a mesnie,' or a collective number of servants.

*Meringue.* Shakspeare says that 'great events from trivial causes spring.' But we may sometimes reverse this saying, and say with equal truth, that trivial effects spring from great causes. It may appear strange that the French could not hit upon a more dignified way of commemorating a victory than by giving its name to a then newly invented cake, but such is the fact. The battle of Marengo produced the 'Meringue'!!

*Miscreant*, which is from the French *mécreant* (or *mécroyant*), was first used in the times of the Crusades, and then signified simply an unbeliever. But disbelief in Christianity being at that time regarded as the worst of crimes, the word soon passed into the more general sense of a wicked wretch.

*Mouchard.*—In the latter part of the sixteenth century, when the French Government was on the look-out for heretics, a certain Antoine *Mouchy*, a doctor of the Sorbonne and canon of Noyon, made himself notorious by his zeal against the Reformers. The secret spies he employed in detecting the heretics were called, from his name, *Mouchards*, a word which now signifies the basest and meanest of betrayers.

*Mountebank.*—This means a quack medicine vendor, so called from the Italian 'montare' (to mount) and 'banco' (a bench). Literally, one

who mounts a bench, to boast of his infallible skill in curing diseases.

*Naught.* 'Aught' is a contraction of the Saxon a wiht (or, a whit), any creature or thing. 'Naught' is the negative of 'aught,' and means 'not a whit.' The adjective 'naughty' is now confined in its application to the behaviour of children; but it was once much more extensively used.

*Palace.* This term, which is now used in a general sense for a king's residence, was first applied to a dwelling of the Roman Emperor Nero. One of the seven hills of Rome was called 'Palatinus,' from Pales, a pastoral deity whose festival was there celebrated on April 21 as the birthday of Rome. Under Nero, all the private houses on the 'collis Palatinus' were pulled down to make room for the Emperor's new residence. This house was called 'Palatium,' and it afterwards became the type of all the palaces of the kings and emperors of Europe.

*Palfrey.*—This is a contraction of the French 'par le frein' (by the bridle). It is a horse used on state occasions, and distinguished from the war horse—a horse led by the bridle, 'mené par le frein.'

*Pamphlet.*—It is supposed that this word is a contraction of the French 'par un filet.' It

means a small book, not bound, but held together by a thread—‘*tenu par un filet.*’

*Pavilion* is derived directly from the French ‘pavillon,’ where it is used in the sense of a tent or flag. But the origin of the word is the Latin ‘papilio,’ a butterfly. Tents or flags would be so called, because of their flapping about as a butterfly.

*Person.* This word was originally a theatrical term, and properly meant an actor. The theatres of the ancient Romans were built so large as to contain between 30,000 and 40,000 people. Now it was impossible for the actors to make themselves heard through so large a space; and they therefore wore masks, inside of which, close to the aperture for the mouth, was a certain mechanical contrivance, which made the voice more sonorous, so that the actors’ words could be heard in all parts of the theatre. The Latin for a mask is ‘persona,’ so called because the voice *sounded through it*. *Per* is in Latin, ‘through;’ and *son* is the root of the verb ‘sonare’ to sound. By a common figure of speech, the word meaning ‘mask’ (persona) was afterwards applied to its wearer; and thus ‘persona’ came to signify ‘actor.’ This was its original, theatrical meaning. But, as all human beings are, in one sense, actors—as they all have a part to play on the stage of life,

the word 'person' was afterwards used in a general sense to signify any one man or woman. In one special case, it appears in the form 'parson,' to designate the 'chief person,' or priest, of a parish. In this sense, however, the word is now falling into disuse.

*Pet.* The French adjective 'petit' (small) is derived from the Latin participle, 'petitus,' sought after. From this root came the English word 'pet.' 'My pet' means literally, 'my sought after or desired one.' 'Petty' is also from the French 'petit;' but it has degenerated: and is now always used in a bad sense, as in a 'petty action.'

*Pert* is nothing else than the old French 'aperte' (from the Latin *apertus*) open, public, without concealment. The sense has now degenerated into 'saucy' or 'impudent.' 'Malapert' had that meaning from the beginning; but this word is now seldom used. 'Pert' seems to have taken its place.

*Poltroon.* The derivation of this word is still undecided; but the following account of it has been offered. In the later ages of the Roman empire, the ancient valour of the citizens had so degenerated that, rather than fight, many actually cut off their right thumbs, in order to disable themselves from using the pike. The Latin for

'thumb' is 'pollex'; and 'truncus' means, in that language, 'maimed' or 'mutilated.' These two roots put together give us 'pol-troon' from '*pollice truncus*,' i.e. with the thumb cut off. As this was done with a cowardly motive, the word very naturally came to signify a coward, a meaning which it retains to this day.

*Pontiff* (Lat. pontifex). There are various etymologies of this word. Varro derives it from 'pons,' a bridge, and 'facere,' to make or build. He says that the pontiffs had built the 'pons sublicius' (over the Tiber); and afterwards restored it, that sacrifices might be performed on each side of the river. It is now used only as a title of the Pope of Rome.

*Porpoise*. This word is from the French porc (hog) and poisson (fish); so called from its resemblance to a hog. Spenser spells the word 'porepiscus.' It is singular that, in this case, the French should have adopted the Teutonic word 'marsouin' (mereswine); while in English it is known by its French name—'porc-poisson.'

*Post*. The apparently contradictory meanings of this word may give it a peculiar interest. In its original sense, it means something *placed*; from the Latin participle 'positum'; as, for example, a pillar fixed in the street. But we also hear of *post* haste, *post* horses, &c., and, in these



cases, the meaning seems directly opposed to the etymology. When letters, parcels, &c. were first transmitted from place to place, stations (or posts) were placed at intervals from each other, and letters were rapidly passed on by messengers from one station to the next, and so on, across the whole country. This was called *post haste*; i.e. in such haste as was used when letters were sent in the above-described way.

*Punch.* The well-known beverage called punch is said to be derived from the Hindostani panch—five. It means a mixture of five ingredients: 1. spirit, 2. water, 3. sugar, 4. acid, and 5. essential oil of lemon.

*Puny.* This is an English form of the French *puis-né*), or (de)*puis-né* (Latin, *post natus*), born since. It is in contradistinction to the French *aîné* (*ante-natus*) elder or born before; and now signifies weak, ill-conditioned in growth. A junior judge is still, in legal phrase, a *puisne* judge.

*Quack.* The whole word is in German 'quacksalber,' of which 'quack' is a contraction. 'To quack' is to talk boastfully—to make a great fuss; and 'salber' is from *salve*, something to heal; so that quacksalber may be explained, one who talks noisily and fussily about his healing medicines.

*Quandary.* This is a corruption of the French

‘qu’en dirai-(je)?’ ‘what shall I say of it?’ It expresses that condition of doubt or uncertainty in which such a question would be naturally asked.

*Ragoût.* This French noun, which may be now considered as naturalised in English, is a contraction of the Italian ‘miro gusto,’ ‘wonderful taste.’

*Raiment* is derived from ‘to array,’ and is a contraction for ‘arrayment.’

*Ransack.* This word is founded in Swedish, ‘ransacka,’ where it means to search a house for stolen goods. It is compounded of the O.N. ‘rann,’ a house, and Sw. ‘soka,’ to seek.

*Religion* is from the Latin ‘re’ (back), and ‘ligare,’ ‘to bind;’ literally, that which binds back, or restrains us from the commission of sin.

*Right* and *Wrong.* The first of these words, in a secondary sense, has a meaning analogous to proceeding in a straight line, the Latin ‘rectus,’ from which it is derived, having that meaning. The French ‘droit’ is from ‘directus.’ Our word ‘wrong’ is only another form of ‘wrung,’ i.e. ‘twisted’ (out of the right line). It may be observed, by the way, that the French ‘tort’ (wrong) is from the Latin ‘tortus,’ twisted; so that the same principle operates in both cases.

*Romance.* A name given to certain European

languages (especially the Provençal), which grew out of the old Roman or Latin. The Troubadours, or poets, who wrote in the Provençal language being notorious for their exaggerated sentiment, the word has come to mean a wildly imaginative fiction; and it is even sometimes used as a softened expression for a falsehood.

*Salary.* This is from the Latin 'salarium.' According to Pliny, it is derived from 'sal' (salt), that being the most necessary article for the maintenance of life. In the reign of the Emperor Augustus it comprised the provisions as well as the pay of the Roman military officers. From 'salary' probably came the expression, 'he is not worth his *salt*,' i.e. his pay, or wages.

*Sarcasm.*—The root of this word is the Greek σάρξ (*sarx*) flesh, from which comes σαρκάζω (*sarcazo*) 'I tear flesh.' The derivation throws a strong light on its true meaning—a tearing of the flesh. But it is now used only in a secondary sense.

*Saunter.* It is said that, in the time of the Crusades, many foreign mendicants overran England. They professed to be on their return from a pilgrimage to the 'Sainte Terre:' and the popular voice gave these vagabonds the name of 'saunterers.'

*Sedition* is from the Latin 'se' (apart), and

'itio,' a going (from 'eo' I go). Sedition, then, means 'a going apart,' i.e. a departure from submission to the laws. It now implies a violent opposition to government, and involves the idea of commotion and disturbance of the peace.

*Seneschal.* This is a compound of the Latin 'senex' (old) and the Gothic 'scalco' (a servant). The seneschal of a castle was, in the Middle Ages, an *aged servant*, whose duty it was to keep the keys, take care of the house, and superintend the feasts and domestic ceremonies. 'Seneschal' means 'aged servant,' as 'marshal' ('mara scalco') means, literally, 'horse servant.'

*Sincere.* One suggestion concerning the etymology of this word is, that it was compounded from the Latin 'sine' (without), and 'cerâ' (wax) — 'without wax.' In this view, the term is referred to a practice of the ancient sculptors, who, when they found a flaw in the marble of which they were forming a statue, filled up the place with wax, in order to conceal the defect. Those pieces of statuary that had no flaws were, consequently, 'sine cerâ' (without wax); and the word 'sincere' thus acquired its present meaning; viz. perfect, whole, without flaw. Many etymologists, however, reject this derivation, and the origin of the word is still considered as doubtful.

*Simple.* Whether 'sincere' be or be not from

'sine cerâ,' it is generally allowed that 'simple' is from the Latin 'sine,' and 'plico,' I fold; i.e. literally, 'without fold.' The Latin 'simplex,' 'duplex,' 'triplex,' &c. are in English, 'simple,' 'double,' 'triple,' &c.

*Soldier.* This English word comes directly from the French 'soldat,' which, again, is from the Latin 'solidus,' Italian 'soldo,' and French 'solde,' 'sou' (pay)—the name of a coin which a man received as his pay for fighting. The word originally meant one who performed military service, not in fulfilment of the feudal obligation, but upon contract, and for stipulated pay.

*Somerset.* The corruption of a word often obscures its derivation; as is the case here. This is originally from the Italian 'soprasalto,' an over-leap. The French corrupted the word into 'sobre-sault,' and the English to 'somersault,' and then to 'somerset.' But it should be always spelled 'somersault.' It properly means a *leap* in which the heels are thrown *over* the head.

*Spouse.* The origin of this word may be traced to the Greek verb σβέννυμι (sbennumi), 'I pour out;' which passed into Latin as 'spondeo' (sponsus). The Latin verb came to signify 'to make a contract' or promise. In making contracts, it was a custom with the Romans to *pour out* libations to the gods. Hence, any one who

contracted an engagement (especially in the case of marriage) was called 'sponsus,' i.e. 'engaged,' or 'betrothed.' The modern Italians softened the word into 'sposo,' and the French transformed it into 'époux.' Then it passed into English in the form of 'spouse.' Godfathers and godmothers are called 'sponsors,' for the same reason; because they engage, or bind themselves, in certain contingencies, to instruct a child in his religious duties.

*Stalwart* is often written, in early English, 'stal-ward.' It is from the Anglo-Saxon 'stal-weorth,' i.e. worth stealing, or taking. The word is now used in the sense of strong-limbed, noble, manly in appearance.

*Stationer.* The word 'statio' meant, in the Middle Ages, 'a stall,' or 'shop,' and was at last used for a shop where books and paper were sold. Hence came '*stationarius*,' one who held a station, or who dealt in books, paper, &c.

*Tawdry.* According to the legend, St. Etheldreda (Saint Audrey) is said to have died of a quinsy, which she considered sent her as a judgment for her vanity concerning necklaces in her youth. Hence 'tawdry' has been explained as the necklace of St. Audrey. The word now qualifies any silly, frivolous ornamentation; fine and showy, but without taste or elegance.



*Thing.* There is a close connection between the noun 'thing' and the verb 'to think.' In fact, the one is derived from the other. For what is a *thing*? It is whatever causes us to *think*. There is the same connection between the Latin noun 'res' and the verb 'reor.' We may also observe that the Italian 'cosa' and the French 'chose' are formed by the same analogy. They both mean 'cause,' i. e. cause of ideas or thoughts.

*Tragedy.* It was a custom with the Greek peasants, when they gathered in the vintage, to recite or sing an ode in honour of Bacchus, their tutelary god of wine; and on this solemn occasion, by way of propitiating that divinity, they sacrificed to him a he-goat. The Greek for a 'he-goat' is *τράγος*; and a song (or ode) is, in that language, *ὥδῃ* (*odē*). Putting together *τράγος* and *ὥδῃ* we get 'tragœdia' (tragedy); literally, 'the song of the goat,' or, the song sung when the goat was sacrificed to Bacchus. Various additions were afterwards made, such as dialogue, chorus, &c., till at length the drama appeared in its present form.

*Wiseacre.* This word has, really, no connection whatever with 'acre.' The two roots, 'wise' and 'acre,' are clearly incompatible. How then, did they come together? The word is, both in spelling and pronunciation, a corruption of the

German 'weissager,' a 'wise-sayer,' or sayer of wise maxims, or precepts.

*Wont.* The Anglo-Saxon 'wunian' meant to dwell, which naturally involved the idea of being accustomed to; for we must become accustomed to the dwelling in which we live. 'He was *wont* to say,' means he was in the habit of saying. Compare the German 'wohnen' and 'Wohnung.'

*Zero.* The name given to the arithmetical '0' is said to be a contraction of the Italian 'zephиро,' a zephyr; i.e. a mere nothing; having no more substance than a breeze, or breath of air. It is also sometimes called a 'cipher,' from the Arabic 'cifir,' empty.

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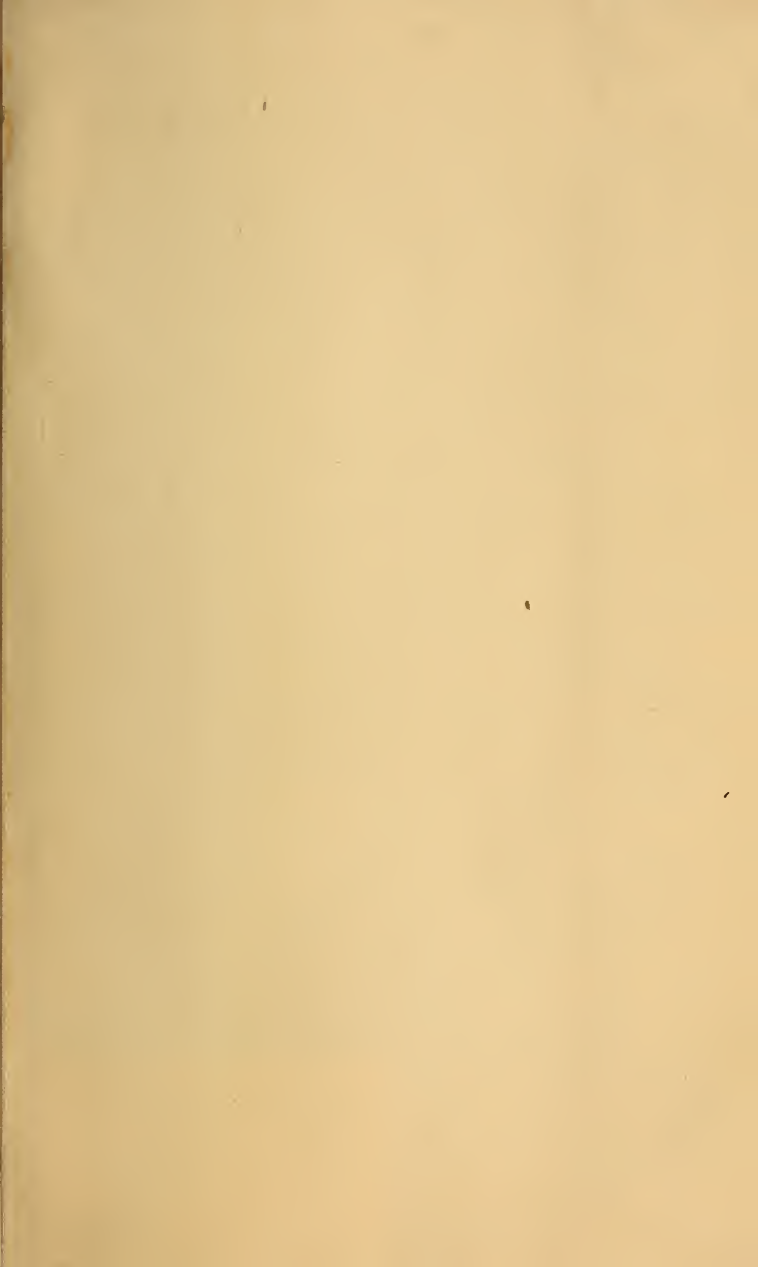
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